

**ramps (rec.arts.movies.production.sound)**

## Sound Production - who do you answer to?

61 views



**Edward Grabczewski**

27 Aug 2000, 08:00:00

to

In a Production Crew, who does the Sound Mixer/Recordist answer to when recording:

- a) Film
- b) Video
- c) TV

Additional information on who the Mixer liases with would be helpful

thanks

Eddy



**dave**

30 Aug 2000, 01:18:38

to

In article <8obgc8\$7q4\$1...@lure.pipex.net>, "Edward Grabczewski" <xy...@dial.pipex.com> wrote:

Eddy-

what do you mean "answer to"?

as far as your list goes, at the risk of souding a bit nit picky, film and video are just mediums. Film is used for movies, documentaries and television. Video is unfortunately just the same, where its staple was once news and TV, it is now being a format that more and more people are using for feature films. In the end, the protocol on a TV show, a feature film or documentary style production is often very similar at its foundation.

Outside of the people that hire you, there really isnt someone to answer to, so to speak. During production the AD runs the show, but there is generally not someone supervising the sound of the movie until after the picture is cut. As a mixer, I would love for supervising sound editors to come on during production to give me feedback on my track, but this

is wishful thinking and in so far as I know, definitely not the norm. The average production mixer is his own boss when it comes to making the decisions that are right for the track on a movie or documentary. TV often has a formula to work with but still, as a mixer, you have to make the best decision in a given situation to get the best sounding track possible.

As far as liasons during production:

Everybody works their own way, but when there is a good script supervisor, I work as close with them as possible in making sure that the dialogue for the scene is covered appropriately, but this is hit or miss from job to job.

The wardrobe supervisor or whoever is the on set rep from the wardrobe dept is often your best friend or worst enemy when it comes to mic'ing actors.

If you are on a job where there is a lot of wiring going on, depending on how the production team works, I'm often in constant communication with the second AD making sure that I get the actors I need for wiring before they are brought to set.

Hopefully these general responses answer some of what you had in mind with your question. If you can post a more specific query I'm sure that that some of us here can attempt to get you the answer you are looking for.

dave raphael

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above email is dead. To contact me, use this:soundguy at glideonfade dot com



**Edward Grabczewski**

1 Sept 2000, 02:35:35

Thanks Dave. I think you've pretty much guessed (from your reply) what I was driving at. The only



**dave**

2 Sept 2000, 02:58:07

to

Eddy-

I think the crux of the crucible here is the business of "answering to". Film production is very similar to other team effort projects, a favorite example of mine is highway construction. There's designers,

engineers, foremans, electricians, concrete specialists, steel workers, etc. Each of these people essentially answers to whomever has hired them, but ultimately, they are there to do a very specialized job and they are surrounded by other people doing their own specialized job, but everybody is there to a) get their individual task done correctly and b) build the road. In a perfect world, each of these specialists would help out the others when asked to be accomodating.

Our job is very much the same. It is true that a mixer can be "answerable to" the DP, as the way we do our job is largely determined by how the DP is going to shoot the film. You can't put a microphone where the camera will see it. Every technician on a film set ultimately is there to service the DP. Not many will admit to this, especially in the sound department, but if the camera wasnt there, there would be no movie... Everything that happens on a film set is designed around the camera. Certainly the type of recording I make is --vastly-- different when I am in a studio or in the field without a motion picture camera around. When there is photography present, the mixers job is to make a recording of what the camera sees, and have your recording contain some kind of ambient relevance to the frame at hand. so in this sense, yes, the mixer is answerable to the DP.

That said, if you are working with a nice DP, and production cares about production sound, often the DP can be answerable to you. I have asked certain DPs to reorganize shots for the benefit of the sound department with great success. Less dramatic than that, it is not uncommon for electrics to move lights, or shadow out areas to hide or eliminate on camera shadows from a boom.

It is also true that we have to answer to the line producer or upm, generally the person in charge of hiring the crew. Everyone on the crew is responsible to these positions in a similar way, however.

I dont do a lot of TV work, but a TV show is very similar if not exactly the same as a feature film when it comes down to the technical execution of a job and that particular job's given responsibility. TV seems to be credited differently than a movie.

See noah timan's response on this one. Its not so much that we are our own boss, if anything, our bosses control our daily activity more so than perhaps most other jobs, discounting a career in the military. A mixer might not be his own boss, but he is responsible entirely for all the sound that is recorded on set. One way to look at it is this: mixers are the boss of sound. If a producer, director or on a good day, DP put in a request for the sound deapartment to change something, the mixer is under obligation to meet their request, while maintaining the integrity of the track. There are few other departments, however, that

could on a daily basis really give us a list of demands that we would have to meet for them.

Many departments share this degree of autonomy, with the director and producer sitting in the middle overseeing. I've never worked outside of the sound department professionally, but I imagine the relationship the sound department has on this issue is probably similar to hair/makeup, wardrobe and even production design.

If you are really interested in learning more, I can't stress the value of on set experience. After a few days on a feature, this will all become very clear. Certainly here in NYC, if you are willing to work for free, there are several low budget movies that would love the help.

dave raphael

In article <8oocks\$590\$1...@lure.pipex.net>, "Edward Grabczewski" <xy...@dial.pipex.com> wrote:

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## **Glen Trew**

3 Sept 2000, 01:07:37

to

Guys, Guys.... let's take the bull by the horns and record! On the set, regarding sound recording, the buck stops with us, the mixers.

The director controls the direction, the AD controls the set, the production manager controls the budget (and ultimately hire/fires the department keys), the mixer controls the sound recording, and the producer can fire them all.

GT

"Edward Grabczewski" <xy...@dial.pipex.com> wrote in message news:8oocks\$590\$1...@lure.pipex.net...



## **Edward Grabczewski**

3 Sept 2000, 20:56:11

to

Feel free to continue the discussion - I'll monitor it with interest.

However, as far as I'm concerned you've all more than answered by problem.

You've helped explain why it is that so many books fail to make this point clear. I'll stop thinking of the Production team as some kind of hierarchy but more as a team - with Glen's point duly noted as the bottom line.

BTW, whilst I have your email addresses, could I have your permissions to ask you some more detailed questions if I need to?

many thanks

Eddy Grabczewski

Multimedia Technology

Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College

England

"Glen Trew" <[gl...@trewaudio.com](mailto:gl...@trewaudio.com)> wrote in message  
news:dDgs5.16479\$Z4.5...@news1.rdc1.tn.home.com...



## **The Sound Dude**

9 Sept 2000, 03:16:15

to John Coffey

John Coffey wrote:

> ..... "I DON'T GIVE A DAMN RATS ASS WHAT THE DP THINKS"!!!!

I guess I'm coming into this discussion late but I'm in a situation right now where I would have to agree with you.

> Most DPs don't care a twit about sound.

Well the one I'm working with on an independant film doesn't seem to care. He is doing something I've never seen before in my nearly 20 years in this biz. This may be something that's popular with some DP's but it's driving me nuts. We are shooting in Academy wide screen and he's framing headroom, etc. within that raster. But he has insisted that my boom guy stay not just above THAT raster line, not even above the TOP raster line. But we have to keep the WHOLE dang viewfinder clear!!!! That robs me of one to two feet sometimes of mic tightness to source and we are shooting a period piece where the background ambience of EVERYTHING is different today then in the 40', 50's, and even 60's. We've had a few "spirited" discussions about it and I've lost each one. I've complained to the director and producer but they are wimps. So I've informed the director (who is the exec. prod also) that he will have quite a few days of ADR, looping and foley on this film. I'm even considering asking that my name be left off the credits because the sound I'm forced to record is so compromised!!

> We work for the producer and director and no one else. It's their movie,  
> their money and their vision.

But when you get overruled by all three then I wash my hands of it and I've noted on the log and on the tape that I was overruled by the DP and director. That way, when they go to cut it and everyone is looking for

someone to blame, they can't look at me. Well, they can but everyone will know the truth.

- > Most DPs only help if they happen to like you. Even then, they usually
- > .... will not help when it takes a little extra effort.

On this film I'm on, there is no communication, no prep, just lighting on the fly, one rehearsal and shoot, no time to work out sound design or problems, no time to build blanket walls, not even time to properly put wires on talent. I've never seen anything like it!!!

- > So, I'm not answering to any damn primadonna DP!

I've given up. I just am trying to get through the final 3 weeks and then I'll never work with these people again. And I'll be more upfront with the UPM before I take another job like this.

- > You get the key grip to respect and like you so that he's more
- > inclined to take that extra step cutting shadows and fixing dolly noise.
- > You stroke the gaffer to keep the generator far away and help with
- > ballast noise....

On this film, I'm friends with everyone already, but that hasn't helped when I've asked for the genie to be parked down the road or behind a building. And the darn DP won't let the grips put up any cutters for us, the stage we shoot on is an old dance club with creaking floors that can't be fixed, and all the actors are whispering their lines so I've got to crank it up. I can hear the crickets farting a half mile away!!!

- > Sometimes, there are one or two who think that sound does not deserve to
- > be treated with any significance.

I seem to be surrounded by many right now. Anyone else have this nightmare to deal with and what did you do???

One thing that happened early on, after a few takes on the first day or so of shooting, I noticed that the third ac was not opening the slate up before we rolled. He waited until they asked for the slate and he opened and closed it like a regular non-digital slate. Well I went to set and told the 3rd to open the slate and let the numbers roll before the clap. Immediately, I was told by the 1st ac that the DP didn't want that. I asked why, he didn't know but I got overruled right away and there was no discussing it. Well, I could see that you couldn't even see numbers when the slate opened so I knew there would be trouble. So I went back to my cart, and turned on the decks and slated a nice long note to post saying that I had just got shot down trying to get them more numbers for syncing and if they had trouble, it wasn't my

fault, I had tried. I also wrote the same in a big note on the log with big arrows, circles and underlines all around the note so you couldn't miss it.

Well, after a couple of days of shooting, the lab called and complained that they were having trouble syncing sound and film because there weren't enough numbers and wanted the slate open for a couple seconds before clapped. The director told the DP he had to change his method and I felt vindicated. The elation didn't last!!!! I almost walked the set last week when after a company move, I walked up to the DP, asked what the setup was and promptly got cussed out for missing his walk through, which I wasn't told about. I went to the Producer and told her that I just wanted her to know that I was taking my toys and going home and to have a nice life. She wanted to know what the problem was and as I told her, the director walked by and got involved. Apparently, everyone was complaining about this guy's attitude and many were quitting or threatening to. The 1st AD nearly walked that afternoon, after my episode.

I still remember when making movies was fun and you actually looked forward to going to set. Is this the wave of the future???? I'll go back to just documentaries and tv shows.

Rob



## **John Coffey**

9 Sept 2000, 05:58:11

to

AHH, Poor Rob:

I was going to rest my case, but Rob, you had to go talk about scumbag DPs and get my blood boiling again. Man do I feel for you!

Isn't it just a great feeling to hate going to work every day with an asshole DP? It's an unfortunate side to our business that this happens more often than it should. So, one day about ten years ago, I decided that I wouldn't let another DP ruin my show again.

First, I want to say that I don't hate ALL DPs! Just the pricks who use their power for evil instead of good. Too many to remember.

I have been lucky to have known and worked with many DPs who I admire and had mutual respect. True gentlemen and film makers like Haskell Wexler, Bill Fraker, Kees Von Ostrom, Mike O'Shea, Victor Kemper, Dick Rollings Jr. and Sr. Jonathan West and many more.

If I sound like I show up at work with a chip on my shoulder for DPs, I do. I have had my extended hand bitten too many times. Now, I give the

DP every courtesy possible, but if they show their true colors to be detrimental to getting good sound tracks, IT'S COFFEY TIME!

I will play the "You Want to See a REAL Asshole Game?" by My Rules! I will tell the director, producer and the producers mother what I think this primaf^%#\*gdonna is doing to hurt the quality of their movie! We will request a meeting to discuss how this DP is screwing the producer by causing an inferior movie product.

If step 1 fails (as it did with Rob), I hate doing this, but step 2 is to see if the DP will wet his pants when we have a private conversation after work. I figure that I don't want to work with that jerk again anyway so I let him know what I think about him, one on one, alone, just him and me. No set power trips allowed here. Remember, these are my rules here. In the parking lot, the DP must now show me respect. Once he sees he was wrong, I always leave him an out. It's important that the DP gets this out because he always seems a lot nicer for the rest of the show.

It's funny too, but I've actually done other shows with some of these pricks who no longer hated sound and we all pretended to like, help and support each other to do better jobs.

Next week's class... how to train naughty grips.  
John Coffey

<http://www.coffeysound.com>



## **Larry Long**

9 Sept 2000, 08:41:28

to

Man I hate I came in so late on this one !

Wow John I dig you man ! you are the shit!

Although I've never had to go to step two of your program I have certainly considered it.

It is unfortunate that some where in the 600 union guide it states that Dp's have to be dicks. (not all you're right ,but most)

You have to love a producer that will stand up for you and I do on this series ,thank god!

Larry Long

ps . Coffey time ,I'd hate to be on the receiving end of that!





**Tom Eichler**

9 Sept 2000, 14:02:24

to

John- Just wondering if you could come by the set of the next show I mix for a day or two- just to let the dp know what's in store for him.

John Coffey wrote in message

<[9081-39B...@storefull-111.iap.bryant.webtv.net](mailto:9081-39B...@storefull-111.iap.bryant.webtv.net)>...



**Noah Timan**

9 Sept 2000, 23:55:10

to

<< I still remember when making movies was fun and you actually looked forward to going to set. Is this the wave of the future???? I'll go back to just documentaries and tv shows. >>

Sorry to hear about your bad job, Rob, but don't despair...believe it or not, there are many DPs out in the indie world who do have respect and understanding for the sound department and are quite easy to work with. I've worked with quite a few over the years and it's usually a fine pleasure. Not all of them are difficult, although there certainly are a few.

I find myself more and more often having a relationship with the DP on set where we don't talk much at all, actually. Not because we like each other or not or because of conflict, but just because other than a few questions about the shot or lens in question (if the AC or AD can't answer them), there isn't need for it -- they're awfully busy and so am I, and the advent of the video tap has often killed all the questions I used to ask before these were as popular (eg what's in the frame, what and who are you seeing, etc). My boom op will have lots of interaction with the DP, but I often don't need to.

I did work with an AC recently who got very upset at the boom being "in" when he saw it in the glass (the safety outside of 1:33), but I just laughed at him. There's no need to get upset as a result of the ignorance of others...just hold your ground firmly.

Noah



**Randy Thom**

10 Sept 2000, 07:45:21

to

I know what you mean, Noah. It's true that in order to do what is normally expected of Mixers and Boom Ops all you have to get from the Camera Dept. is frame information.

Isn't that kinda tragic though? It describes the normal relationship between camera and sound to a tee: Master and Slave. There are benign masters and evil masters, true. But doesn't it seem bizarre that the Sound Dept. is virtually never approached about creative issues? You are almost never asked by the Director or the DP a question like "How do we need to shoot this sequence to make it powerful in terms of sound?" There are obviously a few wonderful enlightened Directors and DPs out there who know the value of sound, but there aren't nearly enough.

I know very well that there is a lot of inertia to overcome before sound is taken that seriously by most film makers. What I'm afraid of is that we in sound get so used to the status quo that we don't even think about questions like the one above. The tragedy of film sound is that it is the one craft which is influenced by creative decisions in all the other crafts, but it is almost never allowed the opportunity to influence any of them.

We aren't going to change that situation anytime soon, and I'm not advocating rebellion on the set. But if we really care about making movies better by figuring out how to help them use sound in the fullest possible way, then the current status of sound on most sets is something I don't think we should be complacent about.

RT



## **Douglas Tourtelot**

10 Sept 2000, 17:01:54

to

It still comes down to the fact that sound can be fixed (albeit poorly sometimes) and picture can't. Not to be too blasé, but it's a true fact of our work. I always try and do my best within the boundaries of the axiom above.

Regards,

--

Douglas Tourtelot, CAS  
Seattle, WA

[tour...@earthlink.net](mailto:tour...@earthlink.net)

"Randy Thom" <[rand...@aol.com](mailto:rand...@aol.com)> wrote in message  
news:20000910024521...@ng-fi1.aol.com...



## **Rusty Fisher**

10 Sept 2000, 17:19:43

to

Frankly, I have been lucky enough to make sure I kiss up to the camera department. It truley works. I have had wonderful experiences with sour-puss DP and later ending up with a great working relationship.

I don't follow the "big toothed" Tony Robbins but do try to use Dale Carnegie's tricks and they seem to work.

I also agree the relationship between the camera and sound dept. will not change but on a more personal level it could if we exercise a bit of kindness and brown noseing of course.

Rusty/boom op

Atlanta



## **The Sound Dude**

10 Sept 2000, 18:49:59

to Noah Timan

Noah Timan wrote:

> .....My boom op will have lots of interaction with the DP, but I often don't  
> need to.....

I have a very aggressive boom op and he defends our dept. with vigor. Last night, we were shooting in a small bookstore and the DP just had to use the widest primes in his kit...FOR EVERY SHOT!!! So with his practice of keeping the entire frame clean, we were on the ceiling, and still casting shadows all over the place. He wouldn't let our grip brothers cut the top and he finally yelled at my boom op about what to do about the shadows. He yelled back to tilt the darn camera down and he wouldn't see the shadows.....hahahahahaha....I just had to laugh in the back room where I was and the director who was on comtek just started chuckling!!!! Score one for the sound guys!!!!

But I don't understand why these guys take it so personal when during rehearsals, they see us in the frame while we are still trying to find our spot. Geeezzz, give us a break, we're still working on it. Just tell us in a nice calm way that we were still in and we'll work it until we get it right. They would get a lot more cooperation with us on their side than making it an us versus them conflict all the time!!!

BTW...thanks to all who have written me off list with your support and funny stories and those who responded on list. It's nice to know that I'm not the only

one going through this crap and thanks also for the great suggestions, even though I've pretty much already done most of them, I do appreciate it.

The DP and I are getting along better and actually have some fun off set. It's just when he gets behind the camera that he becomes the Mr. Hyde!!!

I told him we'd make a pretty good team if we just wouldn't piss each other off so much. He actually laughed at that! And to his credit, he has actually been asking me if I needed frames, or help with shadows, etc. It's not a lot better, but anything helps. And he has given me some nice words about the sound after watching dailies. Of course, wait until he hears it through the giant sound system in a theater.....oh well.

Thanks again...only three more weeks!!!!

Rob



### **The Sound Dude**

10 Sept 2000, 19:04:54

to

Douglas:

Sad but true. And that's what I keep hearing from the director. He'll look over at me and ask if the sound can be used. I'll say no and he'll just say, "We'll then it's another day in ADR". With that attitude, no wonder we get little respect or help.

Rob



### **The Sound Dude**

10 Sept 2000, 19:11:15

to

Rusty Fisher wrote:

- > Frankly, I have been lucky enough to make sure I kiss up to the camera
- > department. It truly works....I also agree the relationship between the camera
- > and sound dept. will not change but on a more personal level it could if we
- > exercise a bit of kindness and brown nosing of course.
- > Rusty/boom op
- > Atlanta

Rusty:

I agree to some point. I'm known as one of the nicest guys in the biz. People hire me for that quality sometimes alone. I get along with everyone. But after you pull out all the stops and they still treat you like dung, then I just stop trying. It's not worth it. I have to expend enough energy to just do the job. I won't play footsy with an idiot. I think there is a line that you have to draw and stand up. I'm still nice and still butter this guy up with compliments and it has seemed to help a little but I've resigned myself to just getting the best I can under the circumstances and go on. It is what it is and I plan on writing this all up in a letter after the job (and my last pay check has cleared:-) and sending it to the Exec Prod and the DP.

Rob



## **Randy Thom**

10 Sept 2000, 23:27:28

to

I don't agree. Sound can't be "fixed" later. A bandage can be put on it, but it can't be fixed. Most ADR sucks. It isn't a fix. It's a crutch, and not a good one.

By the way, increasingly, the picture CAN be fixed in post as least as well as the sound can.

RT



## **John Garrett**

11 Sept 2000, 03:04:25

to

Michael Filosa wrote:

>

> Absolutely nailed it..... the audio dept answers to the Producer. I've  
> been away for a bit, and somewhat floored by the length of this thread on a  
> subject that needs little debate or even THOUGHT. The producer hires me.  
> We all answer to the producer, except for boomers, who answer to US.

>

> If the DP hires me, then I'll answer to him / her. But chances are he /  
> she is wearing all the hats on that instance.... DP - Director - Producer.

>

- > WE DO NOT COWER to the camera dept. We work WITH the camera dept to find
- > compromise in vision and sound acquisition that keeps the producer from
- > losing big bucks on unnecessary looping..... We protect our clients, the
- > producers, (and our results / reputations) from bad sound sometimes forced
- > by picture.
- >
- > Surely we all have been subjected to the "Ring of Fire" lighting
- > "technique" ( a sure sign of a weak DP, or, in some's defense, a situation
- > constrained by time / personell on hand), which causes lots of boom shadows
- > and forces us into distant booming. A good DP benchmark, IMHO, is the
- > number of instruments that come out for even the most basic of shots.

I've always called it "The George Bush philosophy of lighting design" [a thousand points of light].

G. John Garrett, C.A.S.



## John Garrett

11 Sept 2000, 03:06:01

to

The Sound Dude wrote:

- >
- > John Coffey wrote:
- >
- > > ..... "I DON'T GIVE A DAMN RATS ASS WHAT THE DP THINKS"!!!!
- >
- > I guess I'm coming into this discussion late but I'm in a situation right
- > now where I would have to agree with you.
- >
- > > Most DPs don't care a twit about sound.
- >
- > Well the one I'm working with on an independant film doesn't seem to care.
- > He is doing something I've never seen before in my nearly 20 years in this
- > biz. This may be something that's popular with some DP's but it's driving me
- > nuts. We are shooting in Academy wide screen and he's framing headroom, etc.
- > within that raster. But he has insisted that my boom guy stay not just above
- > THAT raster line, not even above the TOP raster line. But we have to keep
- > the WHOLE dang viewfinder clear!!!! That robs me of one to two feet

Sounds like he's an ignoramus, get with the producer and give the boy some education.

G. John Garrett, C.A.S.



## Noah Timan

11 Sept 2000, 06:22:13

to

Randy, you make a lot of great points. I do think, however, that there is a kind of flipside to this coin that should also be considered in this discussion.

Namely, while it is true that the DP-Production Mixer relationship does sort of resemble "master-slave" with regard to microphone placement limitations and that we production mixers tend to get a lot of funny looks when we suggest compromises around frame composition in order to accomodate recording techniques (or just keeping the bleedin' windows closed during a car sequence, or not having a fan blowing to move a curtain behind an actor giving a devastating performance, etc etc), this, of course, is not always the end-all and be-all of our jobs.

In some respects, we have a lot of freedom that some DPs crave, and that is, for better or worse, that most directors are either too busy or too ignorant about sound to get very involved with the recording process and just blindly trust us on making creative decisions about the recording process.

I always try to involve them with discussions about recording perspective, effects, wild sound, and anything that applies to a non-straightforward setup (ie, one that doesn't involve an actor speaking into the sweet spot of a nice microphone very close by...) and these discussions are usually met with minimal creative collaboration and involvement, which is frustrating. I usually get "do what you think is best" and they go back to the other 20,000 questions being asked of them by all the other departments.

However, it does allow us (and I feel it's especially important in the independent world, where many of our directors have much less experience) the freedom to make decisions about recording technique, microphone continuity and how things can be done with minimal interference...unlike our brothers and sisters in the camera department, who are in a constant process of compromise and collaboration. This has its own price, and I'm sure we've all seen frustrated DPs not able to light, shoot, or compose in ways they'd like to because of conflicts between themselves and the director, schedule, or what have you.

As I'm sure many of us have experienced, our directors and producers listening in on their Comteks over in Video Village often wouldn't know bad sound if it bit them in the behind...and I often suspect many of them don't realize it still during picture edit, and only finally get upset at it when the post production supervisor tells them the bad news after the ADR spotting session or they finally hear the camera noise, squeaky chairs, airplanes, or whatever else

it was we were bitching about on set finally rear its ugly head at the mix, when they are finally focusing on sound and sound only.

As a result, we are often blindly trusted to carry out the thankless task of delivering good production tracks...without their input and political ability to change things for us, which is a shame, but also (in many cases) with their firm trust in us and their support for our decisions across the board, which can be a blessing. They understand that getting good sound is "important", but not much beyond that. This essentially allows us to be the "master" of the recording technique, rather than the "slave" of a conflicting approach. While it's not as good as involving the director in creative decisions which affect his or her movie, it does allow us to use our techniques and experience (of mixing many more movies than they have directed) without impediment, which does have its benefits, and I do appreciate those from time to time.

I certainly don't mean to be complacent about the current state of recording sound on set! It's often appalling. However, I don't think that the director of photography is the person with whom we can change this process. Generally, the DP is far too obsessed with his own work to consider ours...most of the DPs I've worked with, even the ones who will change frames for me when I'm stuck or help in other ways, are too overwhelmed by the tasks ahead of them, and to be fair, those tasks in many ways are more laborious and complicated than ours. I'm sure not everyone will agree with this, but I do feel that lighting a set, while the eventual outcome may not be more important than sound, is certainly more time- and manpower-consuming to pull off most of the time. It's only natural that they are too overwhelmed most of the time with their own tasks to be of much help to us...even those who understand the power of sound and how it will help their images be more effective.

The director, on the other hand, is another story... and I think the kind of changes we are wishing for here starts with this person, for it is this person who should be most concerned with creative decisions with sound, for it is he or she who has the most to gain or lose by ignoring us. In the end, we are helping to craft the director's vision...not the DP's. So it is naturally the directors who can make the movies better by taking advantage of all that sound has to offer...perhaps the DPs can technically do this too, but I feel like trying to approach this solution through them is a lost cause.

I do feel that your points have many merits, and this one particularly strikes a chord:

<< The tragedy of film sound is that it is the one craft which is influenced by creative decisions in all the other crafts, but it is almost never allowed the opportunity to influence any of them. >>

But in finding the way to overcome this, we must look to the right people to do this, and not for all intents and purposes perform the act of what seems in my opinion to be banging one's head against the wall (being upset that DPs don't help us much), which, for however justified the action, only leads to a bigger



headache. That's why I feel it's good to enjoy the benefits we do have, take the realistic approach that the DPs are never really going to be of much help in changing the way that we approach sound on film, and pursue other avenues to the eventual goal you describe as best we can.

Just my .02

Noah Vivekanand Timan



## **The Sound Dude**

11 Sept 2000, 06:25:11

to John Garrett

> The Sound Dude wrote:

>

> we have to keep the WHOLE dang viewfinder clear!!!! That robs me of one to two  
> feet

>

> Sounds like he's an ignoramus, get with the producer and give the boy some  
> education.

>

Well, John, I finally got an explanation from the guy. It seems like this is something that is becoming very popular in the biz.

Even though we are shooting academy for projection, they are thinking ahead to tv and video. If they keep the whole negative clean, even though the wide screen will be matted, when they go to tv, if the whole negative is clean, instead of panning and scanning, they can pull back on the negative (going tall to the edge) and keep the whole action in the picture, without the typical pan and scan. It does make sense from that perspective but boy is it making it hard to shoot location, especially on a period piece where the entire background ambience I am hearing is different from what it would be like in the 40's, 50's and even 60's. And I refuse to use rf mics on every scene. It would take forever and half the time the sound wouldn't be much better. Oh well....

Rob



## **Noah Timan**

11 Sept 2000, 06:31:05

to

<< A bandage can be put on it, but it can't be fixed. Most ADR sucks. It isn't a fix. It's a crutch, and not a good one.

By the way, increasingly, the picture CAN be fixed in post as least as well as the sound can.

RT >>

Yes, but being that most directors and producers STILL (after 30? 40? 50? years of ADR) still don't understand the ins and outs of the process and why this is a bandage and not a fix, how long before it will be that they take for granted that picture can be fixed in the way they seem to think that the sound can be fixed?

As usual, we must wait for the entire industry to catch up to being comfortable with real options before those options become viable solutions, and probably even longer before the parties in question are willing to exercise those options comfortably.

Me, at the moment, I'm just waiting for enough post production houses to accept DEVA so I can record on set on a medium and machine much smaller than DAT...not to be overly pessimistic, but I hope I'm still in the business when producers, directors, and other executive decision-makers are as willing to pull out "we'll fix it in post" as quickly for picture as they are for sound, even though it, as you say, can be done today.

Noah



## Jeff Wexler

11 Sept 2000, 06:49:19

to

in article [20000910182728...@ng-ch1.aol.com](mailto:20000910182728...@ng-ch1.aol.com), Randy Thom at

[rand...@aol.com](mailto:rand...@aol.com) wrote on 9/10/2000 3:27 PM:

> I don't agree. Sound can't be "fixed" later. A bandage can be put on it, but  
> it can't be fixed. Most ADR sucks. It isn't a fix. It's a crutch, and not a  
> good one.

>

> By the way, increasingly, the picture CAN be fixed in post as least as well as  
> the sound can.

>

This is a very interesting thread and it touches on issues that I have spent a lot of time thinking about. I agree with much of what Randy points out but I still feel that the one thing that separates the PRODUCTION sound team

from all of the rest of the departments is the fact that the sound CAN be done later. But this doesn't tell the whole story. Firstly, first of all, we must always make the distinction when talking about the "sound for a movie" whether we are talking about the production elements, those primary tracks recorded during production, or all of the other elements that go into the production of the soundtrack that are generally done in post. There has to be a commitment to the acquisition of PRODUCTION sound elements before there can be any respect, understanding or support for what we do in production. Sadly, most directors and most producers do not have this commitment because they have almost never even investigated what are the potential values of the sound recorded "on the day" of shooting. Most directors would like to get something that they don't have to re-do (ADR) and most producers would like the benefit of savings in time and money in post... but that is about the extent of it. It is sort of like what Linus Pauling said when he did his pioneering work on Vitamin C. He declared that the the entire way of looking at vitamin supplements was wrong. The US minimum daily requirement is the amount of a given vitamin required so as to not develop the disease associated with a deficiency. 250 mg of vitamin C per day will avoid scurvy. Linus Pauling said we should be looking at how much vitamin C we need to promote health, not just avoid disease.

In the case of "fixing the picture" later, it is true that it is increasingly more feasible everyday to alter the images digitally, to "fix" things that were not right on the day. But the cost and time involved, with picture, is much more expensive and time consuming than it is with the sound. If the production sound is REALLY BAD, you don't lose your movie, so the necessary steps are not taken on the set, often, to provide for recordings that are little more than documentation of what the actors were saying and in what room. If the same lack of regard for the image side of filmmaking begins to take the form of requiring cinematographers to shoot without lights, without an exposure, this will become the norm if adequate can be economically created digitally at a later date. At this time, the DP will be in the same position as the production sound mixer --- someone else is going to be making the movie and they are going to be doing it later in a room with a computer.

I could go on and on, but I won't. As the film BUSINESS becomes more and more business and less and less film, decisions are going to be made only on the basis of cost to produce the product. This is capitalism, of course, and why should we think that this industry is going to be run by the creative elite we all like to think we are.

Regards, Jeff Wexler



## **Randy Thom**

12 Sept 2000, 00:41:28

to

I agree completely that it is the hearts and minds of the Directors that we most need to change. The fact that so many Directors are ignorant of sound isn't a good thing for us, or for movies, in the long run. In the short term it may keep them off our backs. But it really means that sound is simply not available to them as a creative tool except in the most obvious and banal ways. And it means that in a fundamental way they don't take us or the work we do seriously.

The amazing thing is that very little thought has been put into using sound in film storytelling. It isn't taught in film schools. Most Directors know a hundred times as much about cinematography as they do sound. And we in the craft of sound don't know nearly as much about it as we should either. We get away with it because the Directors don't relate to us as collaborators. Let's face it, if a Director were ever to ask us how to design a scene for sound our first inclination would be to run and hide. We don't usually think in those terms. But we need to if we want them to take us seriously. Once we begin to figure out how to use sound in storytelling then we can begin to help them figure it out.

There is this weird assumption about Directors and sound: that they know what they want from the beginning. That assumption isn't made about any other craft. The Director and the Writer collaborate. They toss ideas around. They argue. They try things. The same happens between the Director and the Actors, DP, Production Designer, Editor, and Composer. With us the dialog is different: We ask them what they want, and they either tell us, or they say they don't know. And that's the end of the discussion. That isn't collaboration. And it's symptomatic of the lowly status of film sound.

RT



## **Charles Tomaras**

12 Sept 2000, 01:57:32

to

Is there a DGA publication or other sort of paper that all of these directors read? Would it be beneficial for possibly the CAS or a consortium of RAMPS contributors to draft an open letter and finance through contributions an advertisement to the directors about taking sound more seriously?

Just thinking out loud again!

Charlie - Seattle

"Randy Thom" <[rand...@aol.com](mailto:rand...@aol.com)> wrote in message

news:20000911194128...@ng-cg1.aol.com...



**alac...@singnet.com.sg**

12 Sept 2000, 02:03:44

to

\*\*\* post for free via your newsreader at [post.newsfeeds.com](http://post.newsfeeds.com) \*\*\*

Been following this thread closely and found alot of good points and humour.

Once I came across an Hong Kong DP who always give me plenty of ideas to fix my sound in post which really makes me wonder why he wanna be a DP. I always heard him talking to the director that this can be EQ that can be noise reduce. I was real piss and i walk up to the DP and try to have a nice chat with him.

Over at lunch I explain with all my knowledge that what we record to tape is like what they put on film. Audio post is suppose to sweeten and not to deface the production sound. With all the mighty post audio technologies we have in this era, still can't get rid of air con rumble, fridge noise ....etc without harming the actual dialog. Spare the post guys more time in creative sound design then to fight with cleaning up the dialog.

I ended the conversation by posting him a question. I ask him why must he remove the trash can which is in frame during the last scene? Why can't he just keep it in frame and scope out the trash can during post. He smile and I guess he understood my explanation coz from then on I heard no more suggestions from him anymore and especially to the director.

Alan Chong (Singapore)

Sent via the SoundSpeed Movie Database

<http://www.soundspeedmovie.com>

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## Jeff Wexler

12 Sept 2000, 03:54:51

to

in article [39BC6CB7...@surf.free.com](mailto:39BC6CB7...@surf.free.com), The Sound Dude at

[soun...@surf.free.com](mailto:soun...@surf.free.com) wrote on 9/10/2000 10:25 PM:

>

> Well, John, I finally got an explanation from the guy. It seems like this is  
> something that is becoming very popular in the biz.

The same thing happened to me for the first time on this last job I did for HBO. The post production supervisor called a meeting for me, the DP (which happened to be my father, Haskell --- I got him the job) the assistant camera person, the editor and others. A five page spec sheet with drawings was passed out to all of us basically explaining that we needed to protect the ENTIRE PHOTOGRAPHABLE AREA so that HBO would have the flexibility to compose and format for any future release, even to countries that don't even yet have a TV system in place. So, I knew the soundtrack would suffer but the sh\*\* really hit the fan when my father looked at this stuff which also suggested in no small way that the COMPOSITION of the FRAME was also of vital importance to HBO and it would be best if all actors and action were confined to the middle 30 per cent of the frame, in the "cross hairs" so to speak. Haskell went ballistic and left the meeting. When we started shooting, the composition was what he wanted and we used a common TOP to protect. So much for the HBO edict.

Regards, Jeff Wexler



## Jeff Wexler

12 Sept 2000, 04:04:08

to

in article [20000911194128...@ng-cg1.aol.com](mailto:20000911194128...@ng-cg1.aol.com), Randy Thom at

[rand...@aol.com](mailto:rand...@aol.com) wrote on 9/11/2000 4:41 PM:

> And it means that in a fundamental way they don't take us or the work we do  
> seriously.

Randy:

This is so true it hurts.

>

>We get

> away with it because the Directors don't relate to us as collaborators.

The closest we ever get to collaboration is cooperation ... and that isn't collaboration as it should be.

>

> There is this weird assumption about Directors and sound: that they know what  
> they want from the beginning. That assumption isn't made about any other  
> craft. The Director and the Writer collaborate. They toss ideas around.  
> They argue. They try things. The same happens between the Director and the  
> Actors, DP, Production Designer, Editor, and Composer.

This is a very good point. They really don't discuss anything with us ...  
you can always tell they are just praying that somehow it will all work out  
in the end, but by "working out" they just mean they won't have to deal with  
the actors in ADR, no one will yell at them for doing stupid things on the  
set, the movie can be completed with a minimum of difficulty, and so on.  
This is pathetic but it is the way of the business. I am clueless as to how  
to change it.

Regards, Jeff Wexler



**Larry Long**

12 Sept 2000, 04:52:31

to

Okay so I'm bummed now , maybe I should have stayed in school or  
learned to carry sand bags:(

Hey another thing although it's off the topic, speaking of Directors.  
When did directing become an entry level position? I see all these  
first time directors esp from the Music Video field showing up to work  
on some decent money productions and they have no clue about sound.

Not my current situation just an observation

Red headed step child of the film industry,  
Larry



## **John Coffey**

12 Sept 2000, 06:19:25

to

I believe that the difference between good and bad set sound tracks is only an extra 5 to 10 minutes a day. That's the time it takes to spend those extra seconds putting down another furni pad, adding another mic, fine tuning a wireless, putting more rubber on the shoes, chalking a dolly wheels, siliconing a squeaky door .....It's what happens between the first take and the printed take. The stuff that can make you seem a pain in the ass to an unappreciative AD or director. We are just trying to do a good job, but we have to sell it all the time and that get old fast.

I've always agreed with Charles idea about the publicity. If only we could could get an effective message to the directors. Local 695 has kicked it around a lot, but we can't seem to agree on what or how to do and therefore the motions keep getting tabled.

CAS has it's hands pretty full just trying to get seminars, the directory and the newsletters with volunteer help.

The single most effective way would be to get an article in DGA magazine condensing the thoughts expressed in this thread. The editor would have to be approached to entertain the idea first, but I think it would be accepted. Sell it with a title such as "How Getting Good Sound On Set Will Improve Your Film"

Now, who has time to bake that pie?

<http://www.coffeysound.com>



## **Noah Timan**

12 Sept 2000, 12:36:37

to

<< The single most effective way would be to get an article in DGA magazine condensing the thoughts expressed in this thread. The editor would have to be approached to entertain the idea first, but I think it would be accepted. Sell it with a title such as "How Getting Good Sound On Set Will Improve Your Film"

Now, who has time to bake that pie?

>>



I personally feel that a good approach might be strength in numbers, rather than one lone mixer on a soapbox. How about multiple contributions along these lines from all of us? Lots of different people here have had interesting and different approaches to this subject. This NG might be a good place to build such a document...

Noah



## Jay Rose

12 Sept 2000, 13:08:14

to

In article <[39bd...@post.newsfeeds.com](mailto:39bd...@post.newsfeeds.com)>, <[alac...@singnet.com.sg](mailto:alac...@singnet.com.sg)> wrote:

|: Once I came across an Hong Kong DP who always give me plenty of ideas

to fix my sound in post which really makes me wonder why he wanna be a DP. I always heard him talking to the director that this can be EQ that can be noise reduce....

Then the director or producer comes to me and expects miracles that can't be done. If I ask why they didn't take five minutes more on the set to record it right in the first place, they explain that they just assumed some box of mine would dial out the room ringing in the voice or bring the dialog up out of the mud, so they didn't worry about it while editing.

I think most directors are trained to regard sound as voodoo. They see you tweak an equalizer on a well-recorded voice and make it sound great, so they figure the eq will work just as well on bad tracks.

A lot of it starts at the schools. My son (also an engineer) just spent a month helping a nationally-respected art school with an allegedly excellent film department get their equipment together for the school year. I was talking to his boss, the director of the sound program there, and mentioned that a particular piece of classic equipment sounded much better if you put a terminating resistor across the transformer-balanced output. She had no idea what balanced wiring was!

--

Jay Rose <<jay at dplay dotcom>>

Clio/Emmy-winning Sound Designer

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## Noah Timan

12 Sept 2000, 13:11:06

to

<< This is a very good point. They really don't discuss anything with us ... you can always tell they are just praying that somehow it will all work out in the end, but by "working out" they just mean they won't have to deal with the actors in ADR, no one will yell at them for doing stupid things on the set, the movie can be completed with a minimum of difficulty, and so on. This is pathetic but it is the way of the business. I am clueless as to how to change it.

Regards, Jeff Wexler>>

To venture a guess, I believe part of it is changing the hierarchy of perceived importance of departments that has conditioned this effect and continues to infect new directors with it. Less experienced directors will take their leads from more experienced ones, and from the industry-accepted idea that production sound: A) can be fixed, and B) is good if everyone can be heard clearly and bad if everyone can't, period. Directors pay attention to issues of background noise when it is so ridiculously loud that they know it is useless or when they are made to understand that has no chance of intercutting, but rarely at any other time. The end-all and be-all of good sound to them (and, I'm afraid, to some of us) is with a quiet enough background and the subjects miked vaguely on axis. They don't ever seem to understand the difference between the effect of someone's voice on a microphone that emphasizes frequencies that bring out a special quality in that voice (and, subsequently, their performance) and the effect of someone's voice on a lavalier buried in clothing and companded to hell on an RF system. We all spend much time, energy, and passion trying to accomplish the former and fight like hell to avoid the latter (come on, folks, our jobs would be pitifully easy if all we had to do was wire everyone for every shot...why would we fight if there was nothing to gain, and "good sound" could be accomplished by this method?)

Like Randy says, this has nothing to do with the visceral impact that sound can have, the storytelling and dramatic impact it can be utilized for, etc etc. Sound design seems to be generally more accepted in this department but I'm sure it is subject to similar pitfalls of ignorance.

To be sure, directors have changed methods of shooting for sound for me before...but only when I whip out the "it will be unusable otherwise" card, never when I whip out the "it will be better and more dramatically effective to do it the way I suggest, even though it will be technically 'usable' the other way" card. Like you say, Jeff, this is not collaboration. It's pandering to a standard that we don't like and don't agree with.

To change this would require enormous courage on everyone's part. What about the supervising sound editor who receives an off-axis and strange perspective line, for instance? Does he have the cojones to say, "I believe in this as a

dramatic effect and we shouldn't loop it", or does he say "I like it, but we should loop it anyway just to be sure you don't change your mind at the mix?" Or maybe, "This sucks. I don't know what that idiot production mixer was thinking!"? If he says the one of the latter, does everyone fall under fire for incurring ADR costs and time? Do we have the courage to present these tracks in this fashion without being blamed for causing same, or are we worried that instigating this response will cause us to not get hired on that producer's next job and not do it? Do we have the courage to stray from pandering to everyone else's idea of "good sound"?

To be sure, not all the instances of deviating from the standard are not that dramatic and would be happily welcomed by everyone in post once the on-set fracas and politics die down. But it seems to me that an overhaul of the approach and the possibilities inherent in recording sound on set is long overdue.

As a final note about another message in this thread regarding publicity, a great DP and a good friend once told me about an experience he had watching dailies. He was watching two different takes -- one which a boom operator was able to be utilized and one which the boom wasn't and radioed lavs were needed. I forget the circumstances that caused this, but he (as a DP) was bowled over by the different effect of the two takes and realized, "the difference was the sound". One was dramatically effective, the other detracted from the dramatic effectiveness of the shot. Perhaps A-B comparisons of certain situations (performances recorded on set vs. ADR performances, situations like the one above, etc) in some sort of presentation would help accentuate our case. Sound speaks louder than words. It might help directors new and old understand just what we're carrying on about and finally make sense to them.

Noah Vivekanand Timan



## Noah Timan

12 Sept 2000, 13:15:15

to

<< Hey another thing although it's off the topic, speaking of Directors. When did directing become an entry level position? I see all these first time directors esp from the Music Video field showing up to work on some decent money productions and they have no clue about sound. >>

I'd venture a somewhat educated guess that music video directors have never had to deal with sound recording and its various pitfalls in directing videos ("playback rolls")...but they do have the confidence from experience in the job title of "director". So some of them feel that they consequently know everything about their job due to said experience and don't want to hear otherwise.

I fear them like the plague.

N



## **Charles Tomaras**

13 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

I'll add my 2 cents, but I'm a nobody who gets excited about a 2nd Unit day playing job. You heavy hitting CAS guys with your oodles of movie experience would really add to the credibility!

Charlie

"John Garrett" <[jgar...@world.std.com](mailto:jgar...@world.std.com)> wrote in message  
news:39BFA2C4...@world.std.com...

>

>

> John Coffey wrote:

> >

> [...]

>

> > The single most effective way would be to get an article in DGA

> > magazine condensing the thoughts expressed in this thread. The editor

> > would have to be approached to entertain the idea first, but I think it

> > would be accepted. Sell it with a title such as "How Getting Good Sound

> > On Set Will Improve Your Film"

> > Now, who has time to bake that pie?

> >

> > <http://www.coffeysound.com>

>

> I'd be pleased to collaborate. Randy? Jeff? Billy? Charlie? ????

>

> G. John Garrett, C.A.S.



## **Mike Hall**

13 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

I used my wife's email account by mistake.

the previous post from Laurel Fest was actually written by Mike Hall  
at [mike...@hotmail.com](mailto:mike...@hotmail.com)

Sent via Deja.com <http://www.deja.com/>  
Before you buy.



## **Laurel Fest**

13 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Edward Grabczewski wrote:

- > In a Production Crew, who does the Sound Mixer/Recordist answer to when
- > recording:
- >
- > a) Film
- > b) Video
- > c) TV
- >
- > Additional information on who the Mixer liases with would be helpful
- >
- > thanks
- > Eddy

My immediate superior is the film's director. I attempt to cooperate with all of the other departments so that I can get the best sound possible for the shot at hand. Communication with the Camera/ grip/electric folk is particularly important, since they can help or hinder my positioning of the microphone those few inches closer that are so critical for recording good vs ok sound. If I feel that an important issue impacting 'good sound' vs 'bad sound' is being misunderstood or ignored, I will take it to the producer of the film who is usually the person who hired me, and whom I consider to be my ultimate boss. .All protestations by DP's and directors to the contrary, the producer is the one person who usually understands the dollars and cents cost as well as the aesthetic losses that result from poor production tracks. It's not just his reel or his resume, it's his money.

Good sound in my world is when in a head-and-shoulders closeup with a clean background,  
I hear the tiny breath sounds, lip smacking, and sometimes the salivary glands at work.



**John Garrett**

13 Sept 2000, 16:52:36

to

John Coffey wrote:

>

[...]

- > The single most effective way would be to get an article in DGA
- > magazine condensing the thoughts expressed in this thread. The editor
- > would have to be approached to entertain the idea first, but I think it
- > would be accepted. Sell it with a title such as "How Getting Good Sound
- > On Set Will Improve Your Film"
- > Now, who has time to bake that pie?
- >
- > <http://www.coffeysound.com>

I'd be pleased to collaborate. Randy? Jeff? Billy? Charlie? ????

G. John Garrett, C.A.S.

**Randy Thom**

14 Sept 2000, 05:27:14

to

I'm going to be totally crazed until Thannksgiving, finishing Castaway, so I couldn't commit much time to it.

An article in the DGA magazine is a good idea, but a seminar at the DGA would be good too. The really cool way to do it would be to get a heavy hitter Director who loves sound to participate. David Fincher might be a possibility. He would attract actual Directors to come to the event. Mr. Wexler, you know the man. Think he'd do it?

RT

**John Coffey**

14 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Before this thread fades forever ito oblivion into another good idea that never happened, I'll take a stab at it if no one else wants too.

Just give me your input to write...

## AN OPEN LETTER TO THE DIRECTORS

I have contacted DGA Magazine to expect this article for submission approval.

Since we are going to go to all this trouble, lets make this really cool!

Let's make it one of our legacies to be the first industry craft to ever write up such a primer for above the line.

It'll be an Audio Manifesto For The Set, something to give to every Director, Producer, AD, DP, Editor, UPM, and Location Manager. Maybe film schools will make future directors memorize it! Lets put our names behind it and also offer it to the Producers Guild, Emmy Magazine, American Cinematographer, Film Maker, Premiere and anyone else that wants to use it. Spread the word as far as we can.

I wrote the first sentences to start this at our new forum found by going to our web site or click directly to  
THE RECORDING ARTS FORUM at:

<http://www.coffeysound.com/ubb/Forum1/HTML/000042.html>

You will have to register for free one time to make your comment seen. Using this letter to advertise the opening of our new forum is what's in it for me, certainly enough to find the time to motivate me to do this free work. Hope you like it. It's different and meant as a supplement to ramps for the web surfer that can never get enough audio talk.

You will see that this forum will work as the best answer for the constant editing that will be required to add your thoughts to the main body of the article.

Let's Rock,  
John Coffey

<http://www.coffeysound.com>



### **Rick Mills**

15 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Charlie...

Thanks for the tips on the phone last week! Really refreshed my one track mind. Knowing your experience, I jumped at the chance to break the mold on my own terms.

We went from Digi Beta to 35mm and back several times a day.

Not sure which I liked more - with film, I'm in control, and know everything is cool. With Digi Beta, it all goes out the window. Is the code on the slate the same as the camera and the Fostex? No one else seemed to care.

I fell back in the groove quickly, got along with the script chick well and had a good time.

All went well, the DP called and thanked me for the good work. He related that the telecine xfer guy said thanks for the pre roll and the good notes. I was floored, concedering I (we) never get anything like that from the news mag people we work with. And nice craft services too. Found a top notch boom guy - after just a couple of takes we were communicating non verbally, with hand signals across a big set with a full crew working. Lots of fun.

Rick



## **The Sound Dude**

15 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to Jeff Wexler

Jeff Wexler wrote:

> ....When we started shooting, the composition was what he wanted and we used a

> common TOP to protect. So much for the HBO edict.

>

> Regards, Jeff Wexler

Good for your dad! And lucky for you. Not only have I been robbed of one to two feet of tight miking, our shooting schedule is so fast that there is no time for deadening sets with blankets, hiding mics on set, etc. The past two days, we were shooting at a house that was supposed to be a remote cabin in the woods, back in 1951. Well the location they picked looked great, but was 150 yards from one of the busiest interstate highways in the nation. What do you think I heard in every single scene???

I hung blankets everywhere I could, even on the outside of the small house, to keep the sound from reaching the hard wood walls and floor where it would conduct into the house. It was a loosing situation. Well, that is what comes from not including sound in your tech and location scouts!!! I walked right to the UPM and told her what was up and asked about the upcoming locations these final two weeks. I had to demand that they locate the base camp down the road instead of 100 feet from the house, and had to through a fit to get the genie an extra 100 feet away, which didn't help much, so I stood there until they pulled three trucks in front of it to block the noise.

Do the rest of you guys have to jump through hoops like this to get decent sound???? Or is there more awareness on large budget films than these independent movies? I'm worn out just from trying to get a decent track!!!!



Rob



## **The Sound Dude**

15 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Charles Tomaras wrote:

> I'll add my 2 cents, but I'm a nobody who gets excited about a 2nd Unit day playing job. You  
> heavy hitting CAS guys with your oodles of movie experience would really add to the  
> credibility!

But feel free to include some of our stories and bad experiences in your article. It seems like this is happening alot on the low end, the independent films, and there are more of them shooting today then every before.

Sincerely,

Rob



## **Ray Beckett**

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

In article <[39C2A66B...@surf.free.com](mailto:39C2A66B...@surf.free.com)>,  
The Sound Dude <[soun...@surf.free.com](mailto:soun...@surf.free.com)> wrote:

>

>Jeff Wexler wrote:

>

>> ....When we started shooting, the composition was what he wanted and we used a

>> common TOP to protect. So much for the HBO edict.

>>

>> Regards, Jeff Wexler

>

I really sympathise. They do not deserve you. I know all too well that feeling of being worn out just by the effort of doing a good job.

So many times being concientious is seen as being a nuisance to other departments who really should know better.

I had an incident where I had to beg the location manager to get a sand blasting machine stopped before shooting a major 6 page dialogue scene. It was only when I told the producer that the entire scene would have to be looped that pressure was put on the location manager to do their job! This was not a low budget film, this was a BBC Drama series.

Far from being thanked for saving them money, the incident started a nasty vendetta by the location department against the sound dept that lasted for the last week of shooting. I like to think that I am a friendly, open, easy-going person. If something comes between me and my getting the results I want then I find that I am forced into "aggressive mode". This is unpleasant and unnatural for me and is therefore very stressful

So unecessary, so counter-productive, so stupid.

Ray Beckett



## **John Garrett**

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Rob, sometimes, after weeks of fighting for the bare minimums with the same production staff/crew on a movie I realize that I am now qualified to teach kindergarten. Yes, it happens to me too. Just a couple of days ago I arrived at my ext/day commercial location, thrilled that production had hired police for ITC.

There, less than 200 feet from the talent position, was the genny, wheel-chocked, cabled and running. At least it was a good excuse not to put a radio on the talent, who was facing the street the whole time.

G. John Garrett, C.A.S.

The Sound Dude wrote:

>

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> > common TOP to protect. So much for the HBO edict.

> >

> > Regards, Jeff Wexler

>



## **Douglas Tourtelot**

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

I guess I have to jump in on this little rant thread. I have been stunned by the change in attitude that has come about in our business over the last few years. Geez, I am sounding like Jim Webb now! What used to be regarded as a proud craft has turned, in some part to a careless hack-job. Now this is not due to the inexperience of the crews. My current crew will talk on and on about the studio releases they have done in the past.

Just this week, I got in a tussle with the Key Grip about light spilling out of a badly wrapped instrument that was causing a mic shadow (easy fix that never got done), a gel that was rattling in a frame (easy fix, never got done). To the Video Op about the village being set up, constantly!, too close to the camera so the boomman was forced to alter her path to get around (had a yelling match over that one late last night). Ballasts with fans set up ON the set with piles of head feeder rolled up next to the lamp. Windows opened to air the room, and then never closed until I asked the ADs, and then much eye rolling and sighing about the odious task of closing them.

It is now okay when we shoot movies to provide lazy, sloppy work! It is hard for me, human nature, not to throw up my hands and jump on the wagon. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't, but it always causes me to go home a little more weary than I should.

I believe that this ugly circle will continue to spiral down so that the producers will have every right to say "video tape is cheap. Let just shoot more," and the days of work that any of us can be proud of will be gone. I hope I retire before I quit!

Rant mode (I am a bit frustrated) off.

PS. Jim Webb was right. "They just don't make movies the way they used too."

Regards,

--

Douglas Tourtelot, CAS  
Seattle, WA  
[tour...@earthlink.net](mailto:tour...@earthlink.net)

"John Garrett" <[jgar...@world.std.com](mailto:jgar...@world.std.com)> wrote in message  
news:39C39437...@world.std.com...

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> > > Regards, Jeff Wexler  
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> > Good for your dad! And lucky for you. Not only have I been robbed of one  
to two



## **Larry Long**

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00  
to

Okay as long we're ranting how's this for slack.....

We are shooting on stage in a cafeteria set,the Production Designer likes to use real greens instead of fake movie trees,the greens people keep about 100 plants in a corral outside the stage where they can get sun and water.

When we move to the stages they drag in these potted trees and shrubs. Well while the plants are outside for weeks they get crickets in them ,now I'm used to axing a random cricket and all but there are multiple little buggers in all the plants,I spray and hunt and go nuts (we are talking about 50 or so plants) I'm lookin' ,my guys are lookin' ,the pa's are lookin'.

I have asked the PD to tell his greensfolk to treat the plants with seven dust 2 months ago,they didn't,I called the greensman (and interrupted her dinner) and asked her to treat the plants 1 month ago,she didn't. Why did they all just roll their eyes and sigh at me when I asked for help?

So last night the director and producers are asking me about all the crickets during a day/ int ! I'm not a cricket wrangler! I'm a sound mixer damnit,as if that's not hard enough.

I put the greensmans phone # on my sound report and explained the situation.

Making excuses though ,is not right ,there are no good excuses ,we all need to turn in good work .

They basically slapped me in the face all night ,last night.

This sounds petty I'm sure but you all feel my pain!

"i've been beat up, i've been thrown out but i'm not down! "  
(The Clash)

Larry Long

ps

Are hair loss and heavy drinkin' sytoms of sound mixing?



## **Eric Toline**

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00  
to

Let's see, I've read about grips, location managers, greenspeople, costume people, DP's, gaffers, AD's, makeup, and just about everyone on the set all afflicted with the same problem. ATS or Allergic To Sound. The symptoms are, Rolling eyes and Big Sighs.

As I see it we're making them do a little extra work and go out of their way to help. So from their point of view we're the PITA's, & the troublemakers.

To just accept the looks from them as they begrudgingly do what you ask will not solve the problem. We need to ask them why it's a problem for them to do what needs to be done.

My take on this is that 99.9999% of what we ask for from a sound POV does not effect the visual portion of the production. That is what everyone is concerned with because they don't understand sound and the many problems that we need to be aware of & fix.

We've all heard the wide eyed questions: "You can hear that?", "But it's outside, how can you hear it?", "Can't you use a microphone that won't hear that noise?". We've all heard every variation on that theme a 1000 times and it never seems to stop. My personal response has always been, "If you can hear it, I can hear it, only better & louder".

I don't profess to have any new answers or solutions except to restate that we need to ask "why is doing what we ask is a problem for you?" Maybe we have to be part educator, instructor, PITA, troublemaker and mentor to improve the final product. It's not a popularity contest, we have a job to do, we're the professionals!!!

There is an old adage that goes: "If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten"

Eric Toline



**John Coffey**

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Douglas:

Take a deep breath, calm down, and remember YOU ARE NOT ALONE!!!  
The only way this will change is through educating the people who work above the line to back us up.

The respect for sound in particular has degenerated to an all time low. It's an insidious thing. I'm not talking now about who's a swell guy, I'm referring to the fact that there is no longer any expectation

that ANYTHING needs to be done to accomodate sound. Film schools should now require kids to get a doctorate in psycholgy before they learn the first thing about audio.

The grip department-

Once upon a time....There really was faraway place only a few remember (about 10 years ago) where every grip took pride in cutting boom shadows whether they liked sound or not. Some were better than others and it was an admired skill. They did it because it was part of their job and they had enough pride in their job to cut shadows properly.

Now..... forget it, most look at you like you have 3 eyes when you ask and ofen don't know how when they do try. The impulse is to want to grab the flag and do it yourself, but instead, you must use this new psycology hocus pocus and get this whole simple procedure cleared by a committee and then coax the grip into putting that flag in the sweet spot. Most don't know and don't care. Period.

You have to pull teeth to get double plywood dance floors for dolly caused floor creaks, chalking squeaking tires and keeping scrims from rattling freely in the wind.

You know, there once was a time where grips parked their taco carts further than 5 feet away from the set and sound got to park in a decent spot not reserved for grip equipment. Now, even if you are lucky enough you set up there first, they often expect you to move out of the room like their gear has priority over your gear. If you defer, you are the bad guy and gee maybe you won't get help in the future (like that's a threat?).

Electricians-

Once upon a time...Gaffers would come to you and apoligize profusely because you could faintly hear the generator a mile away. Variacs were actually used with dimmers. You may have workd with a flat lighting hack sometimes and I we may have hated each other, but at least they always still worked with you to get a mic in somehow. Not because they liked you or not, but because it was part of their job.

Now...Generators get closer every day and God help you if you ask it to move to the place it should have been parked. The excuses are my favorite. Too late, not enough cable, we tried but....

Once upon a time.....Lights used to sometimes get hot and make a little hum which the gaffer would bang till it stopped or change the whole light out.

Now....lights are designed to make noise. I mean it, no thought of the noise from lights is even considered for a millisecond. Xeons are in vogue! The object now is to keep all ballasts as close to the set as possible so that no single noise stands out over the ambient wall of noise which may be louder than quiet dialogue. Move one, you gotta move em all and no one in their right mind would ask for that?

Camera-

Once upon a time.....the 1st AC would tell you (not ask you) that they put a glass over the lenses to stop bad camera noise. of course they only did that after they put on the Barney and the pitch was tuned (they did this already without asking) didn't do the trick. Sometimes they put so many pillows and blankets on the camera, the operator looked like the front end of a horse costume.

Now.....it's, "you want me to do what?"

Wardrobe-

Once upon a time.....They used to understand that hiding wires were part of their job too and most went to extraordinary lengths to help you because they took great pride in their job.

Now....It depends upon the person and their mood that day. The level of cooperation is unsteady and changes from show to show.

Teamsters-

Once upon a time....they would ask you if the makeup trailer parked way down the road could be heard. The only reason you might say yes would be because it was the only thing running.

Now.....Every truck is parked as close as possible to the set and each one has a genie running that mysteriously go on and off all day during takes.

Location Managers-

At least they've been consistent...they've always sucked!

ADs and PAs-

Like lemmings, the more their numbers multiply, the worse they get. They are everywhere except outside the window where you hear the talking. Stop traffic anymore? Forget it. Closed rehearsals and then not giving one to the crew.

However, they still love to nail you with my personal all time favorite, "Waiting on Sound".....some things never change.

So to everyone feeling like Doug,  
Just remember, IT'S NOT YOU!!!

My deepest sympathy,  
John Coffey

<http://www.coffeysound.com>



**John Coffey**

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00



to

LARRY, PUT DOWN THE GUN!

Okay, that's better, now refer back to my reply to Doug and keep chanting over and over that "I Am Not Alone".

I think this is the best thread we have ever had on ramps. We can talk all day about the best mic to use but this is about the crux of the problem. We can clearly see that the situations often dictate that we can do a better job than they will let us do.

It's really a shame and that's why we need to educate them. If the above-the-line departments understand our job better then the theory is that they will go to bat more often for us. It's worth a shot.

Larry, about the crickets, you bring up another sore subject that I'm seeing more and more. Many times post can fix the crickets and some other audio problems on set, but often they are not. Here we are told to give them flat tracks to make fixes in post, then we are left holding the bag when the editor sends it for ADR without trying to save the track for budget, time, incompetence and political decisions we don't even know about.

The post room might not even get a shot at it before it's marked for ADR. The Cameo has proved this on several occasions. It can usually take out crickets, so why not post? We are now seeing examples of scenes being "saved" in production which were not being "fixed" in post but that's another topic.

John Coffey

<http://www.coffeysound.com>



## **The Sound Dude**

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to John Garrett

John Garrett wrote:

- > Rob, sometimes, after weeks of fighting for the bare minimums with the same production
- > staff/crew on a movie I realize that I am now qualified to teach kindergarten.

HAHAHAHAHAHAHA...And the thing is, they don't realize it...they have no clue!!!!

- > ...There, less than 200 feet from the talent position, was the genny,

> wheel-chocked, cabled and running. At least it was a good excuse not to put a radio  
> on the talent, who was facing the street the whole time.

Thanks for the story...I don't feel quite so bad now. Today, we were shooting downtown on a Saturday in a high rise business building so I figured that I would be a little insulated from the genny and outside noise. Noooooooooo!!! We were in a corner office, windows all around, single pained, right next to the bus station and directly across from a building with about 30 tons of industrial a/c compressors that ran the whole time....HAHAHAHAHA....I just can't win!!!! And the DP decides to shoot everything with a 25 mil prime so the boom was on the ceiling...oh well...;-)

Thanks again.....rob



## Eric Toline

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Re: Sound Production - who do you answer to?

Help

Group: rec.arts.movies.production.sound Date: Sun, Sep 17, 2000, 1:53am  
(EDT+4) From: [stevek...@home.com](mailto:stevek...@home.com) (Stephen King)

John, this IS a fascinating discussion. I'm really impressed by the zeal you all express in your pursuit of excellence in production sound. Each contributor to this thread seems like a pro's pro.

<<<<<<small snipage>>>>

What I don't hear any of you talking about, except in passing, is money. That is \*\*\*all\*\*\* that is important to the producer. What I mean by that is the producer has a vision and has budgeted for some level of quality in his project.<<<<<<<<<<

ok, for \$5 you can have really bad scratchy telephone type sound or if you'd like something better we have sound at \$10, \$20, \$30, \$40 & up quality. All I have to do is turn the "sucks" knob up or down. I (we) don't know how to do \$5 sound. Try applying the same analogy to the the camera dept. For \$5 you get fuzzy, blurry, under/overexposed pictures, etc, etc.

As professionals we have to do our best regardless of the rates, anything less can't and won't be tolerated by all concerned.

---

Yeah sure, until they start complaining that the sound sucks. They have short memories of convenience.

Please, these guys are all former used car salesmen.

I think it's fair to say that what we would like is a little cooperation and respect for our requests, suggestions, expertise and professionalism. Don't treat us like the enemy and don't lie to us.

Steve King



## John Coffey

16 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Mr. King:

Your comments were greatly appreciated and the fact that this topic even interested you is a testimony to your willingness to be more openminded about the sound track. The respect we talk about will come if above-the-line understands our jobs a little more. Then, we can be backed up a little more and the rest of the crew will sense that sound is considered important enough to warrant paying attention to our needs. Of course budget is always a consideration. That's part of my point. You really need to know if sound can be quickly fixed at the source on set or pay later to fix it in post. Knowledge about our craft will empower you to make informed decisions immediately.

That's why some of us are pushing the basic education factor. Thanks for your input and showing us that someone is listening. I believe that intelligent producers and directors will think differently once our craft can teach them a few things. It's worth a try and I'm definitely going forward with compiling and distributing this information. It's gotta start at the grassroots first.

John Coffey

<http://www.coffeysound.com>



## Stephen King

17 Sept 2000, 02:53:50

to

John Coffey wrote:

- > I think this is the best thread we have ever had on ramps. We can
- > talk all day about the best mic to use but this is about the crux of the
- > problem. We can clearly see that the situations often dictate that we
- > can do a better job than they will let us do.
- > It's really a shame and that's why we need to educate them. If the
- > above-the- line departments understand our job better then the theory is
- > that they will go to bat more often for us. It's worth a shot.

John, this IS a fascinating discussion. I'm really impressed by the

zeal you all express in your pursuit of excellence in production sound.

Each contributor to this thread seems like a pro's pro. I've only spent a little time on large budget features, time as a principle actor, a day or weekly player, so maybe I'm not really qualified to offer an opinion on your dilemma. However, I have spent a \*\*\*lot\*\*\* of time over the past 30 years on corporate video and commercial jobs, as an actor, as a director and as a producer. Maybe some of the issues that I have to deal with as a director and producer do apply.

What I don't hear any of you talking about, except in passing, is money. That is \*\*\*all\*\*\* that is important to the producer. What I mean by that is the producer has a vision and has budgeted for some level of quality in his project. It might be low or it might be Academy

Award level, depends on the market he's going for. I don't hear you guys talking like a 'partner' to that producer, your employer, the guy who pays your checks. If you were thinking like a 'partner', you might ask the producer, "How much ADR have you budgeted? How strong should I be about getting usable production sound?" If the producer tells you that he expects to ADR damn near everything, then relax. Do the best job you can of getting a scratch track, cuz that's what you are apparently there for. If he says that he is hoping to use as much

production sound as possible, ask if he'll go to bat for you if you make waves on the set to make sure that happens.

I would certainly welcome that approach on my jobs. Sometimes the

budget is real thin. On those jobs I, with my director or producer hat on, know that I'm going to have to accept stuff that I hate to \*\*\*have to\*\*\* accept. Sometimes I'll get a "bad for sound" but I accept the take and move on because I know that I'll have heavy metal music crunching under everything. Other jobs may have a time crunch factor from event to show. I know that the pace of shooting will force me to accept compromises that I will hate. Often enough to keep me doing this I have both budget and time to allow myself and those who work with me to do our best work.

I get the impression that you guys are upset that you can't do the 'no limits' best job you know how to do \*\*\*every time\*\*\* you go to work.

Do these comments make any sense at all in your world?

Oh, your idea for an article in the DGA magazine or seminars for directors... super idea. The more heavy weights you can get to

contribute the better. Line up those little gold statues on the dais before you say a word. They'll listen. Educate them.

Steve King

>



**Jeff Wexler**

17 Sept 2000, 05:40:04

to

in article [39C4241D...@home.com](#), Stephen King at

[stevek...@home.com](#) wrote on 9/16/2000 6:53 PM:

> What I don't hear any of you talking about, except in passing, is  
> money.

Jeff Wexler comments:

I am very sensitive to the budget issue and I have worked on every imaginable type of project with every possible budget and some no budget projects. In my way of thinking, I feel that discussions of budget that take the form of "how much is budgeted for ADR" leads us down the wrong path. There are certainly compromises that are made that are budget related but I have found that if the attitudes are right, from the director and/or producer, and there is sufficient experience and knowledge in the filmmaking craft, very good pictures and very good sound can be had even on ultra low budget films. I did a little movie that had no money to spend but had very experienced production designer, experienced camera department and very experienced actors (Kevin Spacey, Chaz Palminteri, Sean Penn, Meg Ryan and others) and it was wall to wall dialog, and everything turned out just fine. Lots of good decisions were made, mostly by the actors, that helped the whole process. For example, Kevin Spacey convinced the director that poor man's process for a night driving scene in a car was the way to go... not because we couldn't afford a camera car, not because Kevin couldn't drive and act at the same time, but because it was the right way to make all the elements work for that scene, including the advantage of being able to record good dialog (not trying to drive the car all over town, do the dialog, cram the camera in the back seat, put me in the trunk, etc.).

What I think the sentiment being expressed here by some of us is that when the compromises start to come down, at what ever level and what ever budget, the production track is the first to go... either out of ignorance, lack of understanding, lack of respect, or, as I have said before, because the soundtrack CAN be done later.

There has to be a value placed on the production track that takes into account more than just money. Big budget films are almost the worst because they have so much money to spend on everything, including replacing the production sound, it is very frustrating.

It is almost always cheaper to do it right from the start, but "doing it right" means picking a location that will allow good sound to be recorded, hiring a camera person who understands that a movie is more than a series of pretty pictures, having a director who realizes the value of the performance "on the day" (rather than 4 months later on a looping stage), and on and on.

Jim Brooks was pressed for time on a scene we had been doing all day on "As Good As It Gets" and on the last setup, the last printed take, we had some unfortunate background noises and I asked for another take. It did not look like we were going to get it, and I said to Jim something like "we owe it to the actors" and he went ballistic as if I had invaded his territory, killed his children, whatever... and I was just making a really honest statement that relates to what I really feel my responsibility as a sound mixer is on a film. If everyone does not have the highest commitment to the performances on a film, what are we doing anyway? Jim should have wanted the extra take MORE than I should... after all, it is HIS movie.

It's like when I show up at a really terrible unworkable location and someone says "Jeff's not going to like this" --- whether I like it or not should be irrelevant; the location manager should be upset that he hasn't done his job properly, the actors should be upset that they cannot concentrate because of all the noise (and they're going to have to perform it all over again later), AND the director, most of all, should be upset that others have conspired to ruin his movie, either out of ignorance or an allegiance to an unrealistic budget or schedule that dictates that certain things WILL BE DONE very badly no matter what.

> Sometimes I'll get a "bad for sound" but I accept the  
> take and move on because I know that I'll have heavy metal music  
> crunching under everything.

If you are doing your job as director and the sound mixer is doing the job properly, both of you will know there is going to be music playing in the final mix, and many problems disappear. But this is just doing the job. More often than not I have had directors ask me if that background sound was a problem on a certain take and I have to remind them that there will be music underscore or something and it is not a problem. This is what I would call being a partner with the director.

> I get the impression that you guys are upset that you can't do the 'no  
> limits' best job you know how to do \*\*\*every time\*\*\* you go to work.  
>

I am always aware of the limitations on every production... what I get pissed about, though, is when the biggest limitation is a lack of understanding of what we do for a film, and there is no cooperation in solving the problems that come from all the other limitations.

Regards, Jeff Wexler



## **Stephen King**

17 Sept 2000, 06:13:27

to

Jeff Wexler wrote:

Big Snip

>

> What I think the sentiment being expressed here by some of us is that when  
> the compromises start to come down, at what ever level and what ever budget,  
> the production track is the first to go... either out of ignorance, lack of  
> understanding, lack of respect, or, as I have said before, because the  
> soundtrack CAN be done later.

>

The issue of respect or lack thereof seems to be pretty universal in everyone's comments. Why is that? Why don't these people who make movies, these ex-used car salesmen, as Eric calls them, respect sound? Why do they seem to give greater respect to other departments before yours? Is it just that sound CAN be done later? Have the other departments done a better job of creating perceived value?

I'm really not trying to be cute. The questions I'm posing may not be the right questions, but if you are going to change your working environment, change the level of respect given to production sound and, therefore, the level of cooperation you receive in doing your job it would seem to be useful to understand why production sound is held in such low regard.

I'll get out of this now, because, having read the above, I sound like I'm just trying to stir things up. I really don't mean it that way.

Steve King



## **Eric Toline**

17 Sept 2000, 06:38:20





I'm just trying to stir things up. I really don't mean it that way.<<<<<<<<<

Your perspective from both sides of the camera is always a valuable point of view. Thanks.

Eric

Steve King



**John Garrett**

17 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Stephen King wrote:

>

> Jeff Wexler wrote:

> Big Snip

> >

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> yours? Is it just that sound CAN be done later? Have the other  
> departments done a better job of creating perceived value?

I'll tell you why. Because the sound department are the mystics of the film set. What does the camera operator do? Well, look and see for yourself. He's there on the camera and you can see it in the video monitor. What does the production designer do? Any fool can see he/she gives the DP an interesting geography to photograph. What do the grips do? Just look; they're moving stuff around, operating cranes, rigging, bagging, flagging, etc. You can SEE everything everyone else does, or the result of what they do RIGHT ON THE SCREEN. What is the sound mixer doing? I dunno, he's over in the corner doing 'sound stuff'. How many sound mixers know how to set a C stand? Frame a shot? Focus a light? I'll bet you 99% of us can do any of that, having done it or at least SEEN it done. How many 2nd electricians can identify and correct a ground loop? How many 1st ACs can find the sweet spot? How many on-set dressers can determine the correct

rolloff? Not a one. Why? Because what we do is black magic, occult, unknown and unseen.

Its called a visual medium because that's how people THINK, not because that's what it IS. There is a fundamental chasm between picture and sound because of the difference in the way we process visual and sonic information. Out of sight, out of mind? Not just a saying. Visual stuff gets more cortical processing, more conscious energy applied to it than sonic information, which is weighted more toward the limbic system. That's why so much of the emotional content in a film comes from sound. I mean, describe a scene with a swimmer who suddenly sinks out of the shot, or hum that double-bass line; how do YOU tell people about JAWS? THAT'S what made that shot scary! Anyway, since we're so 'consciousness-centric', sound doesn't get thought of [on many levels] the same way, and in many ways not a single person outside the sound department has any clue what we are doing. I always keep a pair of spare cans on my cart and from time to time will invite other crew members to listen to a take if they're nearby or watching the monitor over my shoulder. I can't tell you how many times I've done this and heard the person say "Holy SHIT! You can HEAR EVERYTHING!!!" Yeah, no kidding. That's why when we say "quiet please" we don't mean "quietER..." This little experiment in itself supports my thesis, but there are other supporting data as well.

I don't know what the answer is beyond constant education, but I do believe this is a fundamental reason why sound is misunderstood on the production stage. It is often not active disrespect, but the fundamental human propensity to -think-about -visual- information. Sound gets processed in a dark, ancient place, and its below the conscious level; that's where we, and our concerns wind up.

G. John Garrett, C.A.S.



**robaud...@my-deja.com**

17 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

First of all I have to tell you guys this is one of the best threads I have read on the group. So I have to jump in. Sometimes I think that I am getting old and cranky and long for the old days and 'the way things used to be'. Everything John Coffey listed pertains to sets that I have worked on lately. I would like to add that there was a time when people stopped walking around the stage and bumping into things during takes. I also agree that budget does not seem to dictate what should be ADR'ed. One of my best experiences was on a 2mil dollar film. To my surprise they paid my rate and only found out later that they had given me the budgeted amount plus the looping budget! So everyone knew that we needed 100% production sound. The main house for the film had a creek running under the front veranda where most of the dialogue was to

I feel that John and all are on to something here and that is education. As a group we are in a position to do this. If it is done in a positive way I feel certain that we will see results. Let's get back to the days when sound asks for something it is seen as part of doing a good job and not whining. Let me know how I can help.

Rob Young



17 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

> What I don't hear any of you talking about, except in passing, is money.  
> That is \*\*\*all\*\*\* that is important to the producer. What I mean by that  
> is the producer has a vision and has budgeted for some level of quality  
> in his project.<<<<<<<<<<

- > I don't hear you guys talking like a 'partner' to that producer, your
- > employer, the guy who pays your checks. If you were thinking like a
- > 'partner', you might ask the producer, "How much ADR have you budgeted?"

> ...How strong should I be about getting usable production sound?"

- > If the producer tells you that he expects to ADR damn near everything,
- > then relax.

> If he says that he is hoping to use as much production sound as  
> possible, ask if he'll go to bat for you if you make waves on the set to  
> make sure that happens.<<<<<<<<<<<

That's what we have been talking about! There does not seem to be a lot of support these days for the sound dept. We are the bastard stepchild of the film biz!!!

> Sometimes the budget is real thin.

I guarantee you that it is a lot cheaper to take the time and trouble to get a better track during shooting than to have to build it all over again in post!!!! We are not talking about money here, we are talking about respect and perception. Education is definitely one way on going about it.

> Sometimes I'll get a "bad for sound" but I accept the take and  
> move on because I know that I'll have heavy metal music crunching under  
> everything.

We all know this. I always ask about the track, music, or background that will be laid under the scene. This is not what WE are talking about.

> I get the impression that you guys are upset that you can't do the 'no  
> limits' best job you know how to do \*\*\*every time\*\*\* you go to  
> work.

We are professionals and want to do the best job we can for the job. We are not talking about pride here or being insulted that we can not do our job well. We are talking about knowing what is going to happen when they start cutting the final together and the guys in post are cursing out the sound dept. in front of the director and producer for the crappy sound! Then we get a phone call about the sound. And then they tell others that this mixer sucks, don't hire him. And none of that was our fault!!!

> Do these comments make any sense at all in your world?

It just sounds like you still don't understand what we are talking about. Sure, in smaller projects like corporate videos, etc., there will be compromises. But I've gotten much better sound on those type of shoots than I've been allowed to get on this feature. THAT doesn't make sense to me!!!!

Thanks for your comments. It just shows us we have a lot of work to do to educate those NOT in sound to understand what we are trying to say.

Rob



**John Coffey**

17 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Okay, are we ready for the hard part? We can't just let the momentum fade away to apathy again. Please give me all the concrete ideas that

you have in order that we can try to educate the Above-the-Line about production sound.

Every little bit will help and I promise I will follow through on this to the end.

What constructive ideas do you have concerning how things could be in order to help us do better jobs.

What's your wish list from the following departments ..special effects, camera, grips, electric, teamsters, wardrobe, locations, ADs, directors, producers and actors?

Post here, e-mail me or at the letter in progress at:

<http://www.coffeysound.com/ubb/Forum/HTML/000042.html>

John Coffey

<http://www.coffeysound.com>



## **Raymond Collins**

17 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

I guess you don't have the continuing problem of the AD saying: "Lets shoot the rehearsal". Also blocking that is done with second team, and "scripting" that allows for ad-libs. In these situations it's hard to be "effective" at all. Some mixers are mixing sound for TV like they were doing video, one track wires, one track boom. Can you blame them? At least they won't miss the ad-libs.

"Hans W." wrote:

- > I agree to most of the things said here, but as a soundman I've often
- > wondered about how things work..
- > many of us, ( well, at least many I know, myself sometimes included ) have a
- > tendency to jump up and down in frustration before the first rehearsal is
- > ended. I think we could gain some respect if we just sat down watching the
- > first rehearsal, and then worked out a plan, instead of trying to be
- > prepared from start, doing things that we have to redo anyway. that way the
- > tempo will slow down a bit, but on the other hand there will be no soundept.
- > running around like ants yelling to each other to be "effective". Then we
- > will have more time to do our job, and to discuss things with the producer.
- > Almost every producer I know, respect the sentence : "I don't know, I
- > haven't seen the scene yet!"
- > Working on live television shows, things are different. For instance the
- > light dept. always do the effect-part after seeing the act, but sound always
- > have to be prepared no matter how big the act is, no matter what is missing

> on info about equipment/number of people on stage ....  
> I think TIME is part of the answer. The more time you use, the more respect  
> you get. But you must always be ready in time!!  
>  
> Well, it's late here now.....  
>  
> --  
> Hans W. Hansen  
>  
> [www.haly-tek.com](http://www.haly-tek.com)  
>  
> John Coffey skrev i meldingen  
> <[28334-39...@storefull-112.iap.bryant.webtv.net](mailto:28334-39...@storefull-112.iap.bryant.webtv.net)>...



**Hans W.**

18 Sept 2000, 02:44:13

to



**Noah Timan**

18 Sept 2000, 05:47:49

to

Steve, you bring up some good points worth including in this discussion. It is indeed true that there are some situations where production tracks are not as important as others...when the director is getting the tracks on a whim, "just in case" he might use them under his musical montage, etc etc. Yes, it's true that many of us fight just as hard to get great tracks in these situations as we do when we are informed or understand that the dialogue is critical. Why? Because we want to provide our directors with as many options as possible in post. If he or she decides later that he wants to hear the dialogue under his musical montage, one would think that (s)he's going to expect that the dialogue we recorded be usable even if we told that director on the day that there were location noise problems and (s)he said, "that's okay, I'm not sure if I care about it." He or she also must trust that we are aware of what one can get away with under the circumstances of music being combined with our tracks, and that this is different from a situation where the dialogue recordings need to be presented essentially bare, and that our comments to that person reflect this knowledge. One would hope that we are hired because we have some inkling of these necessities, and that we are trusted and understood that we are raising a ruckus because it's important to the movie, not because we are merely obsessed with getting perfect tracks at all times for the sake of such.

Les Lazarowitz once said, "I can sit there from morning to night, just saying, 'It's no good for sound. A car went by. Do it over.' That's not my job. My job is to intelligently say to the director: 'Yes, I think you can buy that take because you only had two cars go by during that scene. The music from the car radio is at a point where you can cut it out -- it won't be a problem.'"

Even in those confines, does that make sense to you, the producer, in certain limited situations? Perhaps no, and you can choose to override them. As you have pointed out, it is you hiring us, and you can get out of us what you need -- but I can't help but suspect that you're missing the meat and potatoes of this discussion, which is essentially about how recording practices can be used in the director's palette to emphasize the drama and storytelling aspects of making the picture...and how the utilization of these practices have become all but forgotten to many of our directors.

<<f you were thinking like a 'partner', you might ask the producer, "How much ADR have you budgeted? How strong should I be about getting usable production sound?" If the producer tells you that he expects to ADR damn near everything, then relax. >>

Well, I believe many of us do ask these questions, although I think these discussions ideally should take place before we are hired, which might help us make more informed decisions about taking a particular job under these circumstances. Some folks don't want to spend 16 hour days getting nothing but guide track, and that's fair enough. This doesn't always happen, at least in my experience. It's not often (though it does happen sometimes) that a producer or director will tell me that they must shoot in a location where ADR seems to be a necessity during an interview or discussion before the job. Usually, at least in my experience, this is not out of malevolence, because said producers and directors don't anticipate the location noise problems (and don't take us on tech scouts far enough in advance), so when we show up on set, it's too late to fix the problems while still get a financially sound production day out of the process. Then somebody's got to buy the farm. Who? We, the mixers, who put our name (hopefully) proudly on the final product? You, the producers, who do same and suffer the potential damages of ADR, both dramatically and financially? Who steps up?

<< Sometimes the budget is real thin. On those jobs I, with my director or producer hat on, know that I'm going to have to accept stuff that I hate to \*\*\*have to\*\*\* accept. Sometimes I'll get a "bad for sound" but I accept the take and move on because I know that I'll have heavy metal music crunching under everything. >>

In this instance I believe that it has to be known and communicated between the mixer and the producer what "bad for sound" really is. Perhaps "bad for sound" is with the knowledge that the music is crunching over everything. Perhaps "bad for sound" only pertains to a possibility of said music being nixed later



in post. These are decisions that the mixer and producer should, imho, be clearer with each other on than they usually are, and what amounts to some of these frustrations.

<<Do the best

job you can of getting a scratch track, cuz that's what you are apparently there for.>>

This I have a problem with. In the situation of a shoot there should be no "apparently". If all you want's a scratch track, then that should be clear to the mixer, the AD, and the director. Someone's going to have to take responsibility for those tracks, and as a producer (and the person in charge of the money that will pay for ADR and be responsible for whatever creative sacrifices are involved) it sure would make us breathe easier if we had your blessing to go ahead and record unusable material. It still wouldn't make most of us feel better about having to do it, but at that point that's our problem.

I'm not trying to argue that there should never be sacrifices made with the production track. I'm only trying to state that everyone involved should understand what those sacrifices mean -- at what cost and for what benefit, and then make decisions accordingly.

<<I get the impression that you guys are upset that you can't do the 'no limits' best job you know how to do \*\*\*every time\*\*\* you go to work.

Do these comments make any sense at all in your world? >>

They do make sense, and they ring out in my mind as pointing to the collaborative process that is making movies. Sound is not the end all and be all to a production, to be sure -- many other elements go into making a movie, and there are certainly many instances where we as mixers must bear the frustration of compromising our craft to suit the final product. Certain perfect cinematographic compositions should bear the weight of less perfect production sound or the possibility of ADR. But certain performances should also not be rendered unusable because of vague, make-it-up-as-we-go-along ideas about what might work for a shot from a lighting standpoint. (I'll refrain from situations where someone was too lazy to bother to properly secure a gel to a barndoor in the wind, or move a ballast away from the set, or whatever.) What I think most of us are crying out about is that sound has been relegated to the sidelines instead of being out there playing with the team, and the benefits of good sound and what these can do for a picture are gradually becoming lost.

Noah Vivekanand Timan



**Hans W.**

18 Sept 2000, 06:00:25

to

I know. I've been there too. many times. And I've sometimes insisted on seeing the scene ones before I do anything. sometimes that leads to not be called the next time, but sometimes they understand. I like to work for people that understand. Maybe that is why I don't get rich...But it makes me feel better.....? : )

--

Hans W.

[www.haly-tek.com](http://www.haly-tek.com)

Raymond Collins skrev i meldingen <[39C594C3...@intergate.ca](mailto:39C594C3...@intergate.ca)>...

**Noah Timan**

18 Sept 2000, 06:09:12

to

I just wanted to show support for John Garrett's excellent post regarding many of the issues that cause the concerns of the sound department to be misunderstood among our fellow craftsmen on set. This is why John Coffey's proposed document to the DGA (and hopefully other parties) is so important: educating people on what it is that we do and WHY it is so important will help them to understand WHY it is important to the movie...and in turn, help us to work together to make the movie properly. The synthesis of picture and sound is what creates the magic of the movies, at least as we know this magic in this day and age...if we can get everyone to understand how sound can benefit a picture, we might be able to get the ability to do our jobs properly that we are craving, with cooperation from those who place those generators, set those gels, set those ballasts, and determine those locations who otherwise are creating a constant David vs. Goliath for us.

Noah Vivekanand Timan

**John Garrett**

18 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

"Hans W." wrote:

>

> I agree to most of the things said here, but as a soundman I've often

> wondered about how things work..

> many of us, ( well, at least many I know, myself sometimes included ) have a  
> tendency to jump up and down in frustration before the first rehearsal is  
> ended. I think we could gain some respect if we just sat down watching the  
> first rehearsal, and then worked out a plan, instead of trying to be  
> prepared from start, doing things that we have to redo anyway. that way the  
> tempo will slow down a bit, but on the other hand there will be no soundept.  
> running around like ants yelling to each other to be "effective". Then we  
> will have more time to do our job, and to discuss things with the producer.  
> Almost every producer I know, respect the sentence : "I don't know, I  
> haven't seen the scene yet!"

Never, in my 20 years of this, has a producer EVER 'discussed things' with me.  
Never have I been asked a question about how I was going to accomplish  
something, such that I could say "I don't know yet".

That, my friend, is the crux of the biscuit.

G. John Garrett, C.A.S.



## **Jon Trebilcock**

18 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

I think the length of this thread shows the importance of the topics  
discussed. I don't think the multi-track thread we had a while back  
reached anywhere near this length. I just wanted the other "rampers"  
(as JC calls us) to know that this discussion is starting to have some  
affect on set.

Last week I was shooting an educational video with a DP I had worked  
with on many occasions in the past, but not within the last year. Most  
of our previous work had been on film projects, and due to his lighting  
style (the correct way?), he was a pleasure to work with. Always soft,  
and if there was ever something directly behind the camera, it was never  
more than a 4k into a bounce board. Additionally, he has on several  
occasions slightly altered the framing to allow for a boom to get under  
a doorframe, to hide an unflagable shadow, etc. Basically, the type of  
DP we all like working with.

After the shoot, we were catching up and I brought up this discussion.  
I first had to explain that, yes, there is a site on the internet where  
sound mixers (production & post) from around the world can get together  
and discuss various issues that affect us. He wished that DP's had  
something similar. I reminded him that it would be pointless, as every  
one of you KNOWS you are right and anyone who thinks different doesn't  
know what they are talking about. Yes, he did laugh at that one. Like  
I said, great DP.

I brought up John Coffey's simple question, "Why is it a problem to make this fix?", ie; set a flag, move a ballast, etc. The DP's response is the one we have always heard, "Well, you can fix the sound later." I immediately countered with Randy Thom's argument that, "You don't fix it, you replace it. Usually with something that was worse than the original." I then used one of my own analogies. "If you bring in you brand new Mercedes to be fixed, and you show up the next day and they give you the keys to a Ford, would you say you got your car fixed? No, you had it "replaced", with something that was inferior. Sure it runs, and will get you from point A to point B, but it's not as good as what you brought in. That's why the "R" in "ADR" stands for "replacement", not "repair".

Needless to say, he said he had never thought of it that way before. I also brought up the fact than every second a person turns to their husband (or girlfriend, or whatever) and says, "Why does that sound weird?", they are not looking at your beautifully framed, meticulously lit shot. While as late as 15 years ago, most theatres had 50's era Altec speakers, and tv sets only had that 2" speaker, now we have 8 channel digital surround in the theatres and DVD based THX home theatres that actually reproduce the sound accurately. Forget about me and the bevy of editors and mixers who deal with the sound after it leaves my hands, it is not fair to the director to compromise his/her vision. When the director enthusiastically says, "CUT! Print that one! That was perfect," it is not fair to say that it is not important that the performance (s)he just heard is not the performance that will appear in the movie. No, that WAS the performance the director wanted, and after all we both are working for the Director.

That really started to bother the DP, and he agreed that there needs to be far more collaboration with the sound department on set. I pointed out that all you need to say when discussing the shot with the director and 1st AD is, "Why don't we bring in the mixer. He might have some comments about this shot." That one simple statement can go along way to preserving the directors vision, and help to promote better communication between the various entities involved in creating the shot.

I would love to add more to this post, but most of us don't have DSL and there is not nearly enough bandwidth. I just wanted to let you know that this does work, and if we keep trying we might even see something resembling change.

Jon - The F-n' Sound Guy

"Record more than you erase"

-Official Grateful Dead recording motto

"I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."

-Ralph Waldo Emerson



## **Jay Rose**

18 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

|: By the way, I have never once heard an actor say that his or her  
|: performance in ADR was better than the one on the set. ADR is not  
|: acting.

It's been rumored for years that the reason Marlon Brando mumbled was so  
he'd get another chance at the performance when it was looped.

--

Jay Rose <<jay at dplay dotcom>>

Clio/Emmy-winning Sound Designer

Want to learn audio for video? <http://www.dplay.com/book>



## **Charles Tomaras**

18 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

This coming from Jay "I prefer a lav" Rose!

"Jay Rose" <[noLun...@rcn.com](mailto:noLun...@rcn.com)> wrote in message  
news:noLunchMeat-18...@192.168.1.101...



## **Stephen King**

19 Sept 2000, 01:07:02

to

While I said I was dropping out of this discussion indulge me this  
additional time ;-)

Noah, I agree with everything you've said below. What prompted much of  
my earlier posts was/is my amazement that production sound is facing the  
problems you are. I'm amazed...stupified that in your world there does  
not exist the kind of communication and understanding that is so self

evidently in everyone's best interest. I am also befuddled by the proposition that an experienced feature director or producer can be unaware of the importance of sound to the impact of a movie. And, finally, it is absolutely irrational for anyone to blame sound because the microphone hears a generator or a grip's footsteps or a flapping gel. It has to be ignorance, has to be. The violators must think that your tools, are way better than they are, capable of miracles. If so, education is the only answer.

As I said earlier. My jobs are small potatoes. Crews of 5 to 12 are typical. We talk. No, we don't do nearly enough advance location work to find problems early either. But, when the mixer tells me there's a problem, I get a description of the problem and an opinion on what the ramifications will be if I accept the problem and move on, just as you suggest should happen. At that point its my responsibility make a decision and live with it.

Good luck.

Steve King



## **Stephen King**

19 Sept 2000, 02:04:37

to

By the way, I have never once heard an actor say that his or her performance in ADR was better than the one on the set. ADR is not

acting. It is a purely technical skill performed with, hopefully, enough sense memory of how one 'felt' when really doing the scene to make it credible. It is something we get away with, not, in my experience, something to be proud of.

John, perhaps for your article you could talk to a few high profile actors to learn their opinions on whether their ADR performance enhanced or detracted from the original.

Steve King



## **Jay Rose**

19 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

In article <[ssdkdr...@corp.supernews.com](mailto:ssdkdr...@corp.supernews.com)>, "Charles Tomaras" <[tom...@tomaras.com](mailto:tom...@tomaras.com)> wrote:

|: This coming from Jay "I prefer a lav" Rose!

Jeepers: I prefer a lav for video spokesperson talking directly to camera.  
Never said booms weren't right for film dialog.



## **The Sound Dude**

19 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Well friends,

It appears my struggle on the independent film shooting here in central Florida ended suddenly today.

Members of IATSE 477 held a sanctioned picket in front of the stage where we were to be shooting for the final week. It shut production down. The DP caught a plane back to California, all the keys shook hands with each other and left the set (after expressing their extreme displeasure with their union brothers), and I am now out \$2500.00 for the final week of shooting. They said they did it for all of us and that they were being considerate in that they could have called the strike weeks ago but wanted us to have most of our pay checks. Yea thanks, don't do me any other favors. Needless to say, I'm not happy at all!

I said good-bye to the DP today and, trying to be friendly, joked that we would make a pretty good team if we just could keep from pissing each other off. He countered saying that I didn't piss him off, I just exasperated him a few times. WHAT??? I couldn't believe what I was hearing!!! I could have shot back with the everyday crap I had to put up with from him for the past 6 weeks but I was totally professional, figuring it wouldn't do any good anyway, and I'll certainly not work with this joker again on anything, and besides, it was real solemn on the street outside the stage.

So here I sit, feeling sort of like when my first girlfriend broke up with me; mad and hurting inside but glad it's over with.

Thanks for all the support and kind notes. I have learned alot and hope my posts have helped along this discussion. I think we all agree that something needs to be said about our plight and education is a good first step. I know that the next time I sit down with a producer before I accept a job, I will have a long list of things to discuss with them about what I expect from them, and what I can give to them and their project.

Thanks again....

Rob Whitehurst

[www.bigfoot.com/~sounddude](http://www.bigfoot.com/~sounddude)



**Charles Tomaras**

19 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Sorry Jay... I left off the smiley! :) :) <G>

"Jay Rose" <[noLun...@rcn.com](mailto:noLun...@rcn.com)> wrote in message

news:noLunchMeat-19...@192.168.1.101...



**tol...@my-deja.com**

20 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

In article <[39C7EE51...@surfnet.com](mailto:39C7EE51...@surfnet.com)>,

Who is IATSE 477 & why did they picket the production? Florida is a right to work state.

Now explain to me again why unions are so wonderful.

Eric Toline



**Scott Dorsey**

20 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Jon Trebilcock <[fnsn...@webtv.net](mailto:fnsn...@webtv.net)> wrote:

>

>After the shoot, we were catching up and I brought up this discussion.

>I first had to explain that, yes, there is a site on the internet where

>sound mixers (production & post) from around the world can get together

>and discuss various issues that affect us. He wished that DP's had

>something similar. I reminded him that it would be pointless, as every

>one of you KNOWS you are right and anyone who thinks different doesn't

>know what they are talking about. Yes, he did laugh at that one. Like

>I said, great DP.

Tell your DP about the Cinematographer's Mailing list. He can send

mail to [ad...@cinematography.net](mailto:ad...@cinematography.net) to be added. It's lots of fun to

lurk on it and watch all the DPs complaining about sound guys...

--scott



--

"C'est un Nagra. C'est suisse, et tres, tres precis."



**Roger Stevenson**

21 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

[tol...@my-deja.com](mailto:tol...@my-deja.com) wrote:

> Now explain to me again why unions are so wonderful.

Ummm....because they created the rates and rules from which we have fallen?

RGR



**Eric Toline**

21 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Re: Sound Production - who do you answer to?

Help

Group: rec.arts.movies.production.sound Date: Thu, Sep 21, 2000, 9:16am  
(EDT+4) From: [rgrs...@earthlink.net](mailto:rgrs...@earthlink.net) (Roger Stevenson)

Could it be that production dollars are tight and the rates offered are less then what the unions say it should be? They can shut down productions if you don't play by their rules thereby putting people out of work. Sounds like blackmail or price fixing to me. What ever happened to supply & demand pricing.

Eric Toline



**Norman Kern**

21 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Marlon Brando is a Method Actor, and they hate ADR more than anything else.

I have yet to work with an actor in ADR where they wanted to be there, or an actor who thought their performance was better because of ADR.

Norm  
Crazy Dream Sound Productions  
[Craz...@aol.com](mailto:Craz...@aol.com)  
[\(925\)370-1150](tel:(925)370-1150)



## **Edward Grabczewski**

25 Sept 2000, 04:59:05

to

Hi there. Remember me!! When I first asked the question "who do you answer to?" a few weeks ago I promised that I would monitor this discussion after some of you answered. Further replies disappeared from my NG after a few days and so I assumed it'd died out. Today I was looking again and there it was - a real monster that's taken me the best part of two hours to catch up on!

The reason I asked the question was because, as a lecturer in a university, I'm teaching audio and video production and I needed to understand who you reported or "answered" to. I'm fascinated by the fact that in the end, you've agreed amongst yourselves that education seems to be the answer to the misconceptions that surround you all in your art.

Relating the discussion back to my question, it seems that the person you would all like to be your creative collaborator and adjudicator is the director; unfortunately the director often knows so little about the creative possibilities of sound that they virtually ignore you whilst they concentrate on the creative aspects of the "mise-en-scene". In this way you find yourselves excluded from any creative dialogue. But, if you *\*were\** asked for your creative input, in terms of sound, what would you suggest? Are directors taught that the job of production sound is simply to record dialogue and effects - their understanding being that all creative aspects of sound appear in post-production. If this is a misunderstanding then people need to be informed. But, as far as I can see, this is a fair comment isn't it?

When I first read about what happens when a film is produced, I recall being surprised that the director leads a team of: photography director, art director but to sound director. Some books I read had a conflicting ideas about who you guys report to; some said it was the Producer, some said it was the Director, some the Production Manager. But, boy oh boy, I feel sorry for the author who said it was the DOP! But like it or not, the DOP is obviously a crucial person to liaise with; so it seems that the Director is important in managing that relationship, and you guys depend on the Director to do this well. Most of these points have already been made by various people in this discussion.

David Yewdall, in his book "Practical Art of Motion Picture Sound" makes many comments that are in line with the sentiments of this discussion. He has very similar experiences to you guys, and observes that "there is never enough time or money to do it right, but they always seem to find more time and money to do it over!". However, after carefully reading his book I came away wondering who he'd written the book for. At first it seemed to be for Director's and Producers, so that they could appreciate the impact of sound on the whole movie budget. But how many producers and directors would understand how to use Pro Tools? Then I thought, well maybe it's aimed at beginners, but he makes no attempt to explain any terminology and there's no glossary or index. In the end I realised that he didn't really know who his reader was. In other words, he wasn't particularly good at putting himself in another person's shoes. And then I wondered just how much he really knew about the production team outside his own speciality.

My point is this. John's suggestion is a great idea. It has to be drawn up from the viewpoint of the director or the DOP though. If it's just a series of gripes and bad experiences then you'll be dismissed as a bunch of guys with a chip on their shoulder (as I did with Yewdall I'm sorry to say). Perhaps you could approach it from a more positive angle. You could argue for the reinstatement of the Sound Director in this world of increasing audio expectations e.g. sound design and Dolby surround etc. Whilst doing so you could quote from the litany of bad experiences and show how the Sound Director would solve all these problems. Even if you can't get them to agree on hiring this key figure, at least you'll have made your point in a more positive light.

Eddy

"John Coffey" <[coff...@webtv.net](mailto:coff...@webtv.net)> wrote in message  
news:2195-39C...@storefull-114.iap.bryant.webtv.net...

> Mr. King:

- > Your comments were greatly appreciated and the fact that this topic
- > even interested you is a testimony to your willingness to be more
- > openminded about the sound track. The respect we talk about will come if
- > above-the-line understands our jobs a little more. Then, we can be
- > backed up a little more and the rest of the crew will sense that sound
- > is considered important enough to warrant paying attention to our needs.
- > Of course budget is always a consideration. That's part of my point.
- > You really need to know if sound can be quickly fixed at the source on
- > set or pay later to fix it in post. Knowledge about our craft will
- > empower you to make informed decisions immediately.
- > That's why some of us are pushing the basic education factor. Thanks
- > for your input and showing us that someone is listening. I believe that
- > intelligent producers and directors will think differently once our
- > craft can teach them a few things. It's worth a try and I'm definitely
- > going forward with compiling and distributing this information. It's
- > gotta start at the grassroots first.

> John Coffey  
>  
>  
> <http://www.coffeysound.com>  
>

0 views



## John Coffey

unread,

24 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

Eddy,

It must have cracked you up to read what you stared. The thread was the best I ever saw on ramps and the end result is that it's caused a positive attempt to take it further.

I have gotten okays from many people from MIX Magazine to CAS to DGA and others to take this to written form for the directors, producers and other crafts to read.

I am doing this now with the collaborative help of many others. It will be something very cool and will NOT be a bitch list. I promise.

I'm tied up at the AES show this week so I expect we will be finished writing it in a couple weeks and will present it here for final approvals.

Later,

John Coffey

<http://www.coffeysound.com>



## Edward Grabczewski

unread,

25 Sept 2000, 08:00:00

to

I'm glad you had a good laugh. Now that I've woken up after getting to bed at 5am last - even my beautiful wife had to wait whilst I replied to these threads - I have a couple of thoughts. Firstly, the sound guys don't have a representative above the line. The nearest equivalent to the Production Designer might be the Sound Designer (or Director). Secondly, why isn't your union involved in negotiating a better understanding in these matters?

"John Coffey" <[coff...@webtv.net](mailto:coff...@webtv.net)> wrote in message  
news:24804-39...@storefull-113.iap.bryant.webtv.net...



coal mining?

John V



There isn't a lot of demand for coal for home heating regardless of the supply. Your analogy doesn't make sense. When there's a limited demand & a lot of supply, prices usually drop & visa-versa.



**dave**

26 Oct 2000, 22:27:47

to

In article <[6295-39...@storefull-128.iap.bryant.webtv.net](mailto:6295-39...@storefull-128.iap.bryant.webtv.net)>, [Audi...@webtv.net](mailto:Audi...@webtv.net) (Eric Toline) wrote:

Not to start a topic about coal, but I think you'd be hardpressed to find a large portion (or small for that matter) of society that is using coal for home heating. Aside from industrial manufacturing, the bulk of coal is used for powerplants to supply power for homes... Sadly, our coal mining industry is about to become extinct as the imported price of coal is now cheaper to bring in than mining it and our largest coal depository is now the largest national park in the continental US. So much for the coal mines...

dave

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above email is dead. To contact me, use this:soundguy at glideonfade dot com

**ramps (rec.arts.movies.production.sound)**

## **Production Sound - Who Do you Answer to - Followup**

1 view



**soun...@gmail.com**

29 May 2007, 19:35:46

to

Hi all,

came across the post in 2000

called "Production Sound - Who Do you Answer to"

[http://groups.google.com/group/rec.arts.movies.production.sound/browse\\_thread/thread/6d3cecff2aab5253/c9ebcaeae4ef0bdb?q=answer+to%3F&lnk=nl&](http://groups.google.com/group/rec.arts.movies.production.sound/browse_thread/thread/6d3cecff2aab5253/c9ebcaeae4ef0bdb?q=answer+to%3F&lnk=nl&)

started by Edward Grabczewski, whom I met a few days ago.

Just wanted to ask, as I can't seem to find it,

but was there any formal result to this,

eg a letter or statement that I could forward, adapt, use, get tips from,

to send to producers, directors and DP's I know?

I've had several stings this year,

and one that still makes me wake up wound up with anger,

and it's always good to get advice from you lot.

I read that posting with grimace and mirth in equal measure,

regards,

Haresh Patel



**hank alrich**

29 May 2007, 19:57:51

to

<[soun...@gmail.com](mailto:soun...@gmail.com)> wrote:

> Hi all,

> came across the post in 2000

> called "Production Sound - Who Do you Answer to"

>

[http://groups.google.com/group/rec.arts.movies.production.sound/browse\\_t](http://groups.google.com/group/rec.arts.movies.production.sound/browse_t)

hread/thread/6d3cecff2aab5253/c9ebcaeae4ef0bdb?q=answer+to%3F&lnk=nl&

>

> started by Edward Grabczewski, whom I met a few days ago.

Here's that URL shrunk to fit:

<http://tinyurl.com/2ca9zf>

--

ha

Iraq is Arabic for Vietnam



## Marc Wielage

30 May 2007, 05:43:13

to

On May 29, 2007, [soun...@gmail.com](mailto:soun...@gmail.com) <[soun...@gmail.com](mailto:soun...@gmail.com)> commented:

> Just wanted to ask, as I can't seem to find it,  
> but was there any formal result to this,  
> eg a letter or statement that I could forward, adapt, use, get tips  
> from,  
> to send to producers, directors and DP's I know?

>-----<snip>-----<

This might not be exactly what you're looking for, but if you're talking about features and TV work, John Coffey's classic "The Letter" is a good start:

<http://filmsound.org/production-sound/openletter.htm>

That covers a lot of ground.

In answer to your specific question, my opinion is that ultimately, the director is the boss, but the departments that can be most crucial for mixers to deal with are the DP (issues of boom shadows, camera-related noise, etc.), and the editor/post supervisor (audio issues and TC problems in dailies). Plus making sure that the sound supervisor & dialog editors are getting what they need from the production tracks.

--MFW



**soun...@gmail.com**

30 May 2007, 07:38:50

to



Hi Marc,  
thanks for the reply,  
yes I use the Open Letter often, to give to people or talk through the  
points when I can,  
just wondered if there was something more camera-centric that might  
have been written.

Thanks to Hank for compressing my cut and paste..

regards,

Haresh

On May 30, 5:43 am, Marc Wielage <[m...@musictrax.com](mailto:m...@musictrax.com)> wrote:  
> On May 29, 2007, [soundb...@gmail.com](mailto:soundb...@gmail.com) <[soundb...@gmail.com](mailto:soundb...@gmail.com)> commented:



**Martin Harrington**

30 May 2007, 09:50:09

to

--

Martin Harrington

[www.lendaneer-sound.com](http://www.lendaneer-sound.com)

0414 913 247

<[soun...@gmail.com](mailto:soun...@gmail.com)> wrote in message  
news:1180463746.7...@w5g2000hsg.googlegroups.com...



**guest**

30 May 2007, 17:29:25

to

Simple answer; you answer to the person who hired you and is writing  
the check!



edward.gr...@btinternet.com

30 May 2007, 18:10:42

to

On May 29, 7:35 pm, [soundb...@gmail.com](mailto:soundb...@gmail.com) wrote:

> Hi all,

> came across the post in 2000

> called "Production Sound - Who Do you Answer

to" <http://groups.google.com/group/rec.arts.movies.production.sound/brows...>

>

> started by Edward Grabczewski, whom I met a few days ago.

>

> Just wanted to ask, as I can't seem to find it,

> but was there any formal result to this,

> eg a letter or statement that I could forward, adapt, use, get tips

> from,

> to send to producers, directors and DP's I know?

>

> I've had several stings this year,

> and one that still makes me wake up wound up with anger,

> and it's always good to get advice from you lot.

>

> I read that posting with grimace and mirth in equal measure,

>

> regards,

>

> Haresh Patel

Hi Haresh

Just for the record, the Usenet group discussion you were looking for was started on 27 Aug 2000 and can be found here:

[http://groups.google.com/group/rec.arts.movies.production.sound/browse\\_thread/thread/6d3cecff2aab5253/0d4c54b5c4576aaf?q=who+&lnk=ol&](http://groups.google.com/group/rec.arts.movies.production.sound/browse_thread/thread/6d3cecff2aab5253/0d4c54b5c4576aaf?q=who+&lnk=ol&)

Cheers

Eddy